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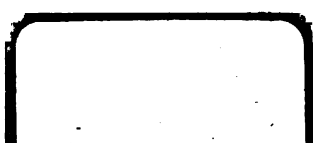
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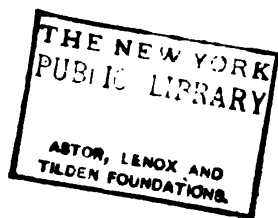
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SHERIDAN

A BIOGRAPHY

19.6
2 vols.





Sheridan.
from the picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds.
in the possession of Horace Noble Pym Esq. of Bristol.

1814. 10. 10. 10. 10.

Richard Bentley & Son

SHERIDAN

A BIOGRAPHY

BY

W. FRASER RAE

With an Introduction

BY

SHERIDAN'S GREAT-GRANDSON

THE MARQUESS OF DUFFERIN AND AVA



WITH PORTRAITS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON

RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON

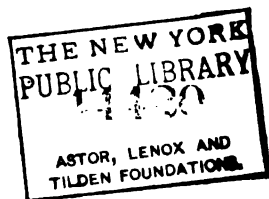
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COLERIDGE TO RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN,

1795.

" It was a Spirit, SHERIDAN ! that breathed
O'er thy young mind such wildly-various power !
My soul hath marked thee in her shaping hour,
Thy temples with Hymettian flow'rets wreathed :
And sweet thy voice, as when o'er Laura's bier
Sad music trembled through Vauclusa's glade ;
Sweet, as at dawn the love-lorn serenade
That wafts soft dreams to Slumber's listening ear.

Now patriot Rage ! And indignation high
Swell the full tones ! And now thy eye-beams dance
Meanings of Scorn and Wit's quaint revelry !"

NOV 21 1900
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I Dedicate this Work

TO

SIR JOHN R. ROBINSON, K.B.

WITH WHOSE FRIENDSHIP I HAVE LONG BEEN HONOURED

AND TO WHOSE WISE COUNSEL AND ACUTE CRITICISM

I ATTRIBUTE MUCH OF THE PLEASURE

WHICH MY SHORT MEMOIR OF SHERIDAN

GAVE TO LORD DUFFERIN.

INTRODUCTION BY SHERIDAN'S GREAT-GRANDSON.

WHEN in Canada several years ago I read with infinite pleasure a work by Mr. Fraser Rae on "Wilkes, Sheridan, Fox; the Opposition under George III." The spirit in which it was executed seemed to me so fair and honest, and the author showed so great a familiarity with the time and events of which he treated, that I determined, if an opportunity occurred, to suggest that he should undertake a complete biography of Sheridan.

I was the more inclined to do this on account of the unfortunate treatment which the subject had received at the hands of previous writers. The biography compiled by Dr. Watkins is a piece of bookmaking of the worst type. Moore, who professed to be Sheridan's friend and admirer, and to whom his papers were entrusted, committed the fatal fault of planning his "Memoirs" of Sheridan upon too large a scale. Having got half-way through his task, he allowed

six years to elapse before finishing it. By this time it had become an unwelcome burden, as he notes in his *Diary*, and this is only too evident from the somewhat ungenerous and subacid tone in which he continued it.¹ This was followed by the scandalous sketch of Professor Smyth, who, taking advantage of his residence in Sheridan's house as his son's tutor, vented the ill-humour engendered by a position distasteful to his vanity, in spiteful libels on his patron. He committed the further crime of interpolating an atrocious falsehood about a perfectly innocent person. Subsequent biographers and essayists, having no original material at their disposal, have been obliged to fall back upon Moore's perfunctory narrative, with its many inaccuracies, or to eke out their story with the idle gossip and injurious inventions which, in the nature of things, were sure to accumulate around the reputation of a person endowed with Sheridan's gifts and idiosyncracies.

No man has ever lived in more worlds than Sheridan, or has ever shone with such brilliancy in all. In the world of fashion, in the company of wits, among authors, painters and poets, in the

¹ His lamentations over his "task" are frequent and strongly worded, as, for example, "I often wish Sheridan, Miss Linley and Major Mathews at the Devil." While not confessing indebtedness to Watkins in his "Memoirs" of Sheridan, he writes in his *Diary*: "Worked a little at 'Sheridan'; badly off for materials; almost reduced to Watkins" (Moore's *Diary*, vol. ii., pp. 173, 207).

House of Commons, at the Court of the Prince Regent,—whatever society he frequented,—he moved a star. His charming manners, his handsome person, his gaiety, and, above all, his good nature, which was one of his principal characteristics, rendered him universally popular. But these engaging qualities were sometimes marred by the foibles and peculiarities which are most apt to attract attention and to serve as weapons in the hands of a man's enemies. In early manhood he became one of the chiefs of a political party when party strife ran high, and when virulent calumny and abuse, in an age more coarse than ours, were considered legitimate means of offence, and his memory has suffered accordingly. Moreover, from his youth, two impediments clogged and embarrassed his every step,—his poverty and his Irish origin.

Sober English common-sense has always been suspicious of impecunious brilliancy in public men. While admiring, it distrusts it. Talent, to command confidence, especially in those days, had to be supplemented by wealth or birth ; otherwise it was regarded as consisting, like a comet, of shining and attenuated gases, and its possessor was dubbed “an adventurer.” Now, Sheridan was not only poor but improvident, and though few could have been better born, so far as good birth is dependent upon ancient ancestry and feudal

distinction in a man's own land, he had no root in the country of his adoption. This latter circumstance was almost an insuperable bar to political advancement. The chief offices of the State were then regarded as the patrimony of the great Whig and Tory families, to which it would be presumption for a stranger to aspire. But, although Sheridan forced his way through this artificial barrier and was soon associated in a close confederacy with Fox and the other Whig leaders, the straitened circumstances of his youth, in spite of the large though precarious income subsequently created by his talents, dimmed his prestige, embarrassed his daily life, and enveloped his declining years in disheartening gloom. Yet, notwithstanding the burning of Drury Lane Theatre, his debts in their totality were never considerable, and at his death did not much exceed £5,000. Though owing little, however, he owed that little to a great number of people, who were themselves needy, and who filled heaven and earth with their complaints. Had Sheridan, like Fox, Pitt, Burke and many a contemporary, owed vast sums of money to persons of his own degree, we should have heard little of these obligations; but to withhold £5, justly due to your bootmaker, is properly considered more discreditable than an indefinite tardiness in repaying £10,000 to a too-confiding friend.

For a like reason Sheridan's conviviality has been more rigorously denounced than many a contemporary toper's sodden and unredeemed intemperance. Wine quickly disordered his high-strung nervous system; and, while delighting the harder-headed drinkers around him with the sallies of his wit, two or three glasses were sufficient to upset the delicate poise of his brain. As a consequence, his cheerful and comparatively innocent indiscretions over the bottle have been more frequently in men's mouths than the results of deeper potations of his more stolid boon companions. In later life, alas! for a certain period, grief and accumulated misfortunes drove him into more serious lapses, but from the dominion of these, to his great credit be it said, he eventually redeemed himself.

From the foregoing it will, I think, be easily understood how it came about that an altogether mythical Sheridan should have been presented to the imagination of the present generation, and how idle fables and a thousand trivial and sometimes disparaging anecdotes should have accumulated by the force of attraction round an individuality so various in its moods, so many-sided, so dramatic, and so eminently social. Even Moore, his contemporary, with every means of information at his disposal, was obliged to admit, when concluding his biography, that he really

knew little about Sheridan ; while, in the opinion of another authority, " the real Sheridan has disappeared for ever."

To prove that this is not altogether the case is the task which has been undertaken by Mr. Fraser Rae. In his pages, the Sheridan of actual life is depicted with all attainable clearness, and the representation differs fundamentally from the portraits of him by previous biographers, none of which are lifelike, while some of them are obviously dishonest. At the same time, from the careful and accurate account Mr. Fraser Rae has given of Sheridan's progenitors, those who love to study the traces of heredity will learn from what sources Sheridan drew both his talents and his characteristics. Nor has Mr. Fraser Rae forgotten to delineate with a tender and loving hand the likeness of the angelic woman to whom Sheridan was united under such romantic circumstances, who shared his earliest trials, whose sweetness and beauty shed an additional grace on his subsequent triumphs, and who, perhaps happily for herself, did not survive to witness the descending shadows which enveloped his later days.

Whatever the family could do to facilitate the author's labours has been done. Mr. Algernon Sheridan, the present representative of the house, has placed all the Sheridan papers at his disposal. A certain number of contemporary

memoirs, which had not been published in Moore's time, have still further assisted him; while his own indefatigable energy in ascertaining dates, in sifting the loose statements of others, and in hunting up and down through England, Ireland and Scotland for any vestiges of Sheridan's correspondence which may have been hidden away among the archives of the great Whig houses, has led to the discovery of many new and interesting facts. Amongst such vestiges are the letters which passed between him and Thomas Grenville when both were young men. They are, indeed, equivalent to a revelation, reflecting as they do with ingenuous precision Sheridan's high sense of honour, the noble tone of his early aspirations, and the extraordinary industry and energy with which he was endeavouring to fit himself for a useful and distinguished career. Nor must Mr. Fraser Rae's narrative in any way be regarded as an Apologia. He possesses the confidence of Sheridan's descendants, because the family know from his other writings that he is studiously impartial and conscientiously accurate. Accuracy and impartiality were all that they bargained for, tempered by that benevolence of treatment of which the most blameless stand in need.

But one is tempted to wonder whether, even in the most favourable circumstances, any human being can be really resuscitated and a fair pre-

sentation be given of the component parts of his nature, of the workings of his mind, and of the successive acts by which they were followed. Even in Art, what a confusion of identity exists in the portraiture of the same individual by different hands! No one can tell what Mary Queen of Scots was like, and the portraits of Napoleon before he became famous convey the idea of a very different face from that preserved in his later likenesses. How much more difficult becomes the task when we are dealing with the subtler lineaments of the soul, the spirit, the moral and the intellectual character! Are we able to form a just conception of those with whom we are most familiar,—our acquaintances, our friends, our nearest relations? If we criticize any of them, do they not at once proclaim that they have been misjudged? If we are criticized ourselves, do we not, with perfect sincerity, groan over the obliquity of our detractors? Did they know all the secret springs of our conduct, the excuses for our apparent failings, should we not be clad in robes of light, even in the eyes of these perverse observers? We have some inkling of the ways, motions and characteristics of Dr. Johnson; but it required a miraculous conjunction of circumstances to give us even this image. We have a pretty close acquaintance with Samuel Pepys,—at all events, as he existed between the

years 1659 and 1669; but Pepys' Journal is a unique production. Of Cicero and of Rousseau we also know something, thanks to the shameless egotism of the Genevese and the amiable vanity of the Roman. But the biographies of most men stand in the same relation to their real selves as white paint in a picture does to the sunlight it is intended to represent.

Still, what could be done for Sheridan has been done by Mr. Fraser Rae. Thanks to his conscientious exertions, we can follow the hero of the story which he tells through the vicissitudes of his existence, with a clear perception of his complex nature. Many of the absurd and spiteful misrepresentations which malice or ignorance had invented have been exploded by him once and for ever;—among them, for instance, Croker's revolting and absolutely untruthful account of the sordid circumstances in which he represents Sheridan as having died, the real facts being plainly set forth in a letter, now made public for the first time, from his son, Charles Sheridan, who attended him in his last moments, to his elder brother, who was then at the Cape of Good Hope. Nor can the record fail to excite the sympathy of the English-speaking race, for Sheridan had many claims both on their admiration and their gratitude. His own letters and those of his wife and sister clearly prove the admiration

he inspired in those who knew him best. An idea of his extraordinary talents as an orator is conveyed by the effect which they produced upon his contemporaries, who were themselves intellectual giants. The present, and each intervening generation that has basked in the sunshine of his gaiety and enchanting wit, as embalmed in his plays, can estimate his literary genius for themselves. The wisdom of his statesmanship and his strong good sense are proved by his having been the devoted champion of every cause whose eventual triumph has made England what she is ; while his pathetic death, untitled and in comparative poverty, when he had had a coronet and large emoluments within his reach, bears witness to his political virtue, and to that scrupulous sense of honour which even his critics admit to have been sometimes excessive.

The highest in the land took part in his funeral procession ; and he lies side by side with the most famous Englishmen in Westminster Abbey. Sheridan's titles to the envied distinction of a last resting-place in that grand temple of reconciliation and glory are clearly and fully set forth in the work to which these words form the introduction.

DUFFERIN AND AVA.

PREFATORY NOTE.

BY THE AUTHOR.

THE lineal descendants of Sheridan, of his elder brother and elder sister and of his noteworthy personal friends, who possess many unpublished papers by, or concerning him, have put them at my disposal, and these have proved of incomparable use in the composition of this biography. Other persons, who learnt from the public Press how I was engaged, have courteously and most generously offered me papers either written by Sheridan, or addressed to him by his contemporaries. Hence it is that I am able to narrate with accuracy several incidents in his career which have been disingenuously perverted, and to disclose many novel facts of much biographical interest.

Though I have expressed in footnotes my gratitude to those who have lightened and given value to my labours, I wish here to return special thanks, firstly,

to his Grace the Duke of Devonshire for allowing me to print some of the documents which are treasured in Devonshire House and to his sister, Lady Louisa Egerton, for her trouble in copying the passages in them relating to Sheridan ; secondly, to the Lady Kinloss of Stowe for having unreservedly permitted me to examine and quote from the private papers of her distinguished ancestor, Thomas Grenville, who was Sheridan's oldest and most attached friend. I cannot exaggerate or adequately acknowledge my obligation to Mr. and Mrs. Algernon Sheridan of Frampton Court, into whose possession many of Sheridan's letters, as well as the manuscripts of his works have passed. Mr. Algernon Sheridan naturally cherishes the memory of his great-grandfather. His wife, whose father was Motley, the eminent historian, regards with like admiration the great ancestor of the family to which she has added a fresh grace and charm. Her interest in the subject of my biography, and help during its preparation, will have largely contributed to its success, should success be its lot.

I deplore having to announce that several of Sheridan's papers have been missing for many years from the muniments at Frampton Court. . Some of them were entrusted to Moore. His custom was to

save himself a little trouble by sending to the printer the manuscripts, with the passages marked on them, which he wished to be put in type. It is not wonderful, in these circumstances, that a few of the papers went astray, while it is very unfortunate that they should now be in other hands than those of Sheridan's lineal descendants. A laxity prevails with regard to the sale or purchase of family papers which is almost unknown in the case of family plate. An auctioneer of repute would hesitate to announce for sale, and a scrupulous collector would hesitate to bid for silver spoons bearing the Sheridan crest. Yet no auctioneer appears to have displayed any reluctance in disposing of, neither does any collector seem to have had qualms of conscience in acquiring, private papers appertaining to the Sheridan family. Some documents, which ought to be at Frampton Court now, were "collected" by the late Mr. McHenry, and Mr. Augustin Daly, in his turn, bought them after Mr. McHenry's death and added them to his library in New York. He has readily and most kindly allowed me to copy and use such of them as possess intrinsic interest. I cannot help regretting, however, that certain letters of a purely private and domestic character should ever have been removed from the custody of their natural owners, while I cherish the

hope that, some day or other, these letters may be magnanimously returned.

Extracts from a few of the Sheridan papers, which are now in Mr. Daly's library, appeared in *The English Illustrated Magazine* for 1877, in an article by Miss Matilda Stoker. Their publication was made with Mr. McHenry's consent, but he declined to suffer the source to be indicated from which they were taken. Miss Stoker was under the impression that the documents were preserved in a barrel where they had been placed in 1809, when Drury Lane Theatre was burning. After the article appeared, a critic perceived that the barrel must be mythical. He rashly maintained, however, that all the papers from which Miss Stoker had made extracts must have been forged. Since then, he has unwisely plumed himself upon having exposed "a literary imposture."¹ A facsimile of the most interesting of these documents is given in this work. It is the last letter penned by Sheridan's first wife, and it was received by him when he returned to her after a brief absence, the postal authorities having re-addressed and forwarded the letter.

I apprise the intending reader of the following

¹ "Memoirs of an Author," by Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, vol. ii., p. 319.

chapters that few specimens of Sheridan's table-talk will be found in them. Most of the sayings which are generally attributed to him cannot be authenticated. Those who desire to learn what he neither did nor uttered will have their curiosity gratified by turning to a recent edition of "Joe Miller" and to "Sheridania." What is recorded by Archbishop Whately in Dr. Boyd's "Last Years of St. Andrews" might have been put into Sheridan's mouth : "I think of one volume which shall be my last—a collection of good stories about myself, every one of them absolutely false." I have had the good fortune, however, to enhance the value of this biography by including in it some comments upon Sheridan which eminent living men have kindly written for me. Mr. Sutherland Edwards has criticized *The Duenna*. Mr. Bancroft has narrated how he and his accomplished wife presented Sheridan's comedies to the public of this age. Sir Henry Irving has honoured me and done a service to the readers of this work by writing a concise, yet comprehensive and pregnant critique upon Sheridan as a dramatist.

To Mr. Gladstone I owe interesting reminiscences of his talks in earlier years with one who knew Sheridan personally, while I have been encouraged in my task by the expression of his opinion that, "a

searching and impartial life of Sheridan will be a real addition to history and literature."

When visiting Dublin to see the house in which Sheridan was born, I was surprised that no commemorative tablet was on the outside of it. Such a tablet has been affixed to the house in London where his last years were passed. I was gratified to observe, however, that the citizens of Dublin consider that no monument is required to perpetuate Sheridan's fame. Doubtless, they entirely agree with what Rückert wrote of Lessing :

*" Ihm ein Denkmal zu errichten braucht es nicht
—Er hat's gethan."*

" For him, no monument is needed ;
He has raised his own."

* * A full report of the reply of Sheridan to the defence made by the counsel for Warren Hastings, forms the Appendix to the second volume of this biography. That speech, which is noteworthy, both for its forensic skill and oratorical power, has not appeared either in any work dealing with Sheridan's career, or in his collected speeches.

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BIOGRAPHY OF SHERIDAN

I.

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN'S PROGENITORS.

I.

HIS PATERNAL GRANDFATHER.

THE Reverend Dr. Thomas Sheridan lives in history both as the bosom friend of Swift and the grandfather of Richard Brinsley. He made Swift's acquaintance shortly after the indefatigable and incomparable political services of Swift to the Tory party in England had received the final and, in his opinion, utterly inadequate and disappointing recompense of the Deanery of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. Swift's ambition as a clergyman was to be made a Bishop. Neither his marvellous talents, nor his ability as an intriguer had enabled him to attain the desire of his heart.¹ He was ten years older than Dr. Sheridan, who was a man of high culture and a most genial disposition, who was remarkable for his wit and his thriftlessness, and

¹ Grattan told Rogers that "Swift was on the wrong side in England, but in Ireland he was a giant."—"Recollections by Samuel Rogers," p. 95.

whose nature was entirely devoid of the guile to which many men owe their discreditable success in life. By preaching an inoffensive sermon on a text that, in the opinion of censorious hearers, savoured of rank sedition, he unwittingly marred his fair prospects of preferment in the Church which he adorned.

Swift openly and generously acknowledged Dr. Sheridan's talents, demeaning himself, however, by unveiling and ridiculing the weaknesses of his worthiest and most attached friend. Lesser men have not scrupled to disparage Dr. Sheridan. He was misunderstood and misrepresented while alive, and maligned after he had passed to his eternal repose. His fate resembled the common lot of those who, being neither hypocrites nor charlatans, dedicate their talents to the welfare and enlightenment of their fellow-men.

Dr. Sheridan's illustrious grandson suffered in turn at the hands of rancorous critics who envied his greatness, and who spitefully and falsely affirmed that his intellectual powers were neither rare in quality nor wide in their range. If Sheridan had cared for exaggerated adulation during life and longed for posthumous and conventional eulogy, he would have accepted a peerage, and then, having had his name inscribed in the Book of Dignities, he might have been idolized by those who have thought it becoming to make him the target for their scorn.¹

¹ "He might at any time, had he so chosen, 'have hid his head in a coronet,' as he himself expressed it."—"Memoir of Lady

His paternal grandfather was born at Cavan in 1687. Educated in Dublin by Dr. Jones, he was entered at Trinity College, as a pensioner, on the 18th of October, 1707. It is recorded in the Matriculation-book that he was the son of a gentleman, that he took the degrees of Bachelor of Arts in 1711, of Master in 1714, of Bachelor of Divinity in 1724 and of Doctor in 1726. Soon after graduating, he married Elizabeth, the daughter of Charles MacFadden of Quilcagh House in the county of Cavan, a place which passed into his possession after his father-in-law's death.¹ Swift wrote that he acted like too many clergymen, "who are in haste to get married when very young, and from hence proceeded all the miseries of his life."

Swift sought and made Dr. Sheridan's acquaintance on account of his reputation as a wit and a scholar. He was so greatly pleased with Dr. Sheridan as a companion that he invited him to pass his holidays at the Deanery, where a room was reserved for him and called by his name. The Dean and he engaged in a course of classical reading. Dr. Sheridan succeeded in gaining the good

Dufferin," p. 17. Disraeli was shrewder than Sheridan. The Earl of Beaconsfield received homage as a divinity from those who had reviled plain Benjamin Disraeli as "an adventurer."

¹ The house and lands of Quilca, Dumbrat, and Carrickacrow belonged at an earlier day to the Sheridan family. The attachment of the Sheridans to James the Second was punished by the forfeiture of their landed property, while the devotion of Charles MacFadden to William of Orange was rewarded with it. The happy accident of a marriage led to the restoration of the old stock to the old home.

graces of Stella, consequently he rose higher in Swift's favour. For a time he was a successful and very popular schoolmaster. Many of his pupils were sons of the best families in Dublin. Swift was untiring in extolling him as a scholar and teacher. When obliged to remain at home, owing to illness, Swift took his place in the school. The Earl of Orrery, who disparaged Dr. Sheridan as a man, admitted that he was "perfectly adapted for the station of schoolmaster, and that although not over-strict in his own conduct, yet he took care of the morality of his scholars, whom he sent to the University remarkably well grounded in all classical learning, and not ill-instructed in all the social duties of life."¹

Swift held that Dr. Sheridan was in his right place as the head of a school; "here he shone in his proper element. He had so much skill and practice in the physiognomy of boys, that he rarely mistook at the first view. His scholars loved and feared him. . . . Among the gentlemen in this kingdom who have any share of education, the scholars of Dr. Sheridan infinitely excel in number and knowledge all their brethren sent from other schools."²

His first school was crowded with pupils, and yielded him an income of £1,000 a year. Unfortunately for his wife and children, Dr. Sheridan was a better scholar than a man of business. His son has recorded that "he was a perfect child as to the

¹ "Letters from John, Earl of Orrery, to his Son," p. 84.

² Swift's Works, Scott's edition, vol. ix., p. 303.

knowledge of the world." I may add that a more tender-hearted and thriftless man never lived. His purse was ever open to the indigent ; his table was free to all good company. Children were born to him for whom he never dreamt of providing ; he thoroughly enjoyed the present and took no thought for the future. Swift hoped that a removal from Dublin would have a beneficial effect, and procured his appointment as headmaster of the Royal School at Armagh, with the salary of £1,400 ; but Dr. Sheridan, in accordance with the advice of unworthy friends, elected not to leave the capital. In after-days he had cause to regret this decision, because those who had counselled him to remain in Dublin subsequently helped to establish a rival school. On the 17th of January, 1735-36, he wrote from Cavan to Swift :—" As for my quondam friends, as you style them, quon-dam them all. It is the most decent way I can curse them ; for they lulled me asleep till they stole my school into the hands of a blockhead, and have driven me towards the latter end of my life to a disagreeable solitude, where I have the misery to reflect upon my folly in making such a perfidious choice at a time when it was not in my nature to suspect any soul upon earth."¹

Swift did not neglect any opportunity, in the earlier years of their friendship, to advance Dr. Sheridan's interests. After Carteret became Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, he wrote to him on the 27th of April, 1725 :—" I have only one humble request to make to your Excellency, which I had in

¹ Swift's Works, vol. xviii., p. 404.

my heart ever since you were nominated Lord-Lieutenant, and it is in favour of Mr. Sheridan. I beg you will take your time for bestowing on him some Church living, to the extent of £150 per annum. He is agreed on all hands to have done more public service, by many degrees, in the education of lads than any five of his vocation ; and has much more learning than usually falls to the share of those who profess teaching, being perfectly skilled in the Greek as well as Latin tongue, and acquainted with all the ancient writers in poetry, philosophy, and history. He is a man of good sense, modesty and virtue. His greatest fault is a wife and four children ; for which there is no excuse but that a wife is thought necessary to a school-master.”¹

This request, which was honourable alike to Swift and its subject, was favourably entertained by the Lord-Lieutenant, who appointed Dr. Sheridan one of his private chaplains and gave him a living in the county of Cork. Other influences than his friendship had been brought to bear, as Swift admits in a letter to Tickell, the friend of Addison, on the 18th of September, 1725,—“I was the person who recommended Mr. Sheridan ; but the Bishop of Elphin took upon him to do it in form, and gave it a sanction, and was seconded by two other Bishops, all principled according to your heart’s desire, and therefore his Excellency has nothing to answer for.” When Dr. Sheridan went to be inducted at Cork, he was asked by Archdeacon

¹ Swift’s Works, vol. xvi., p. 451.

Russell to supply his place in the pulpit. Sunday arrived, and Dr. Sheridan had forgotten his promise to the Archdeacon. The time for the sermon approached, yet he did not appear in church. His son relates that a message from the parish clerk was received by him at his lodging where he was seated half dressed and plunged in reverie :—" He dressed himself with all speed, and of two sermons that he had brought with him took the first that came to his hand, without looking at it. It happened that the 1st of August in that year fell on that very Sunday : and the 1st of August, being the day on which Queen Anne died, was, at that time of party, a day of great celebrity, and much adverted to by the Whigs. But this circumstance had not at all occurred to the Doctor, who looked on it only as a common Sunday, without considering the day of the month. The text of this led sermon happened to be ' Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.' Such a text on such a day excited a general murmur through the whole congregation, to the great surprise of the preacher, who was the only person ignorant of the cause ; of which he was not informed till after he had descended from the pulpit, when the affair was past remedy."¹

Mr. Richard Tighe, an ardent Whig and a supple courtier, who was among the congregation, probably shared the prevailing opinion that the preacher was a Jacobite, and the sermon may have confirmed him in his belief. He journeyed post-haste to Dublin

¹ " Life of Swift," by Thomas Sheridan, in his edition of *Swift's Works*, vol. i., p. 372.

and reported what had occurred, and the Lord-Lieutenant, fearing that he, in turn, might be charged with lukewarmness to the Sovereign unless he acted promptly, struck Dr. Sheridan's name out of the list of his chaplains and forbade him to appear at the Vice-Regal Court. If an explanation had been called for, a satisfactory one could have been given. Not a word bearing upon politics was contained in the sermon; moreover, it had often been delivered without exciting objection or comment. However, a sermon preached out of due season may not tend to edification.

Swift was at Quilca when he heard Dr. Sheridan's version of the affair and wrote to him on the 11th of September, 1725:—"If you are indeed a discarded courtier, you have reason to complain, but none at all to wonder; you are too young for many experiences to fall in your way, yet you have read enough to make you know the nature of man. It is safer for a man's interest to blaspheme God, than to be of a party out of power, or even to be thought so. . . . It is indeed against common-sense to think that you should choose such a time, when you had received a favour from the Lord-Lieutenant, and had reason to expect more, to discover your disloyalty in the pulpit; but what will that avail?"

Dr. Sheridan contemplated proving his innocence by printing his sermon, but Swift dissuaded him, alleging it to be "a project abounding in objections unanswerable." He adds—"You think all the world has now nothing to do but to pull Mr. Sheridan down; whereas, it is nothing but a slap in

your turn, and away. Lord Oxford once said to me on an occasion, 'These fools, because they hear a noise about their ears of their own making, think that the whole world is full of it.' When I come to town we will change all this scene, and act like men of the world. Grow rich, and you will have no enemies."¹

Archdeacon Russell felt that Dr. Sheridan had been very harshly treated and did his best to make compensation. He was the owner of a large property and childless. He generously bestowed upon Dr. Sheridan, by deed of gift, the manor of Drumlane in the county of Cavan, from which the income was then £250 and increased later to £800. The addition to Dr. Sheridan's means was followed by greater lavishness in his expenditure. He had £1,400 a year, a sum which, in those days, was generally considered large. If it had been twice that amount, the possessor might not have been any the richer.

He was reluctant to take fees from pupils whose parents were poor, and he even received indigent boarders into his house without charge, treating them as his own children. His daughters were educated most expensively; he sent his son, Thomas, to Westminster School. He gave concerts which were greatly liked, and emptied his purse; his frequent dinner-parties were occasions of rejoicing to his many friends, while they contributed to his own impoverishment. Meanwhile, his school suffered from competition with the one which his hypocritical

¹ Swift's Works, vol. xvi., pp. 471-473.

advisers had founded. He exchanged his living in the county of Cork for that of Dunboyne near Dublin, and, as his son writes, "he was egregiously outwitted," losing £60 annually by the transaction.

When Swift had put within Dr. Sheridan's reach the fixed and large income of the Royal School at Armagh in substitution for the precarious income of his Dublin school, he had declined to avail himself of the tempting offer. Yet, when his circumstances were less prosperous, he exchanged his living of Dunboyne for the Free School at Cavan, and he did so without consulting the Dean. This was not to Swift's taste, as he loved to make his friends follow the course he indicated in preference to that which they fancied. However, as Mr. Thomas Sheridan wrote, his father's society had become indispensable to Swift, who visited Cavan to enjoy it. He was then nearly seventy, and subject to fits of depression which made him an unpleasant companion. Nevertheless, Swift's demeanour towards his godson was always praiseworthy, as is shown in the following passage from his godson's pen:—"I was at Cavan at Swift's arrival, and during the whole term of his continuance there. It grieved me much to see such a change in him. His person was quite emaciated, and bore the marks of many more years than had passed over his head. His memory greatly impaired, and his other faculties much on the decline. His temper peevish, fretful, morose, and prone to sudden fits of passion, and yet to me his behaviour was gentle, as it had always been from

my early childhood, treating me with partial kindness and attention, as being his godson ; often giving me instruction, attended with frequent presents and rewards when I did well. I loved him from my boyish days, and never stood in the least awe before him, as I do not remember ever to have had a cross look, or a harsh expression from him."¹

The custom of Swift passing many months at a time at Quilca, and Dr. Sheridan spending his holidays at the Deanery in Dublin, continued till 1738. In the earlier days of their acquaintance, he was pressed by Swift to give him notice whenever he displayed avarice in his old age, a vice which Swift styled the most detestable of all. Dr. Sheridan promised to do what was requested of him, and, when Swift had grown old and extremely penurious, Dr. Sheridan noted in his journal all the instances of the failing which he witnessed during a fortnight's stay at the Deanery. He mentioned to Swift what he had done and recalled the promise on the subject which he had made. His son thus describes what ensued :—" Swift, as one suddenly alarmed, answered with precipitation, ' Yes—I remember it very well—why—do you perceive anything of that sort in me ? ' ' You shall be judge yourself '—said the Doctor—' read over that paper and see if it is not high time I should now perform my promise.' The Dean read over the articles with a countenance in which alarm and despondency were blended. When he had done, he leaned his head

¹ Sheridan's "Life," in his edition of Swift's Works, vol. i., pp. 376, 379, 380.

upon his hand, with his eyes cast on the ground, and remained for some time buried in profound thought; at last he just lifted up his eyes, without changing his posture, and casting a side-glance at the Doctor, with a most significant look, asked him, 'Doctor—did you never read *Gil Blas*?' "

This occurrence had its natural sequel. Dr. Sheridan had grown tired of living in Cavan, alleging, as Swift records, that the air "was too moist and unwholesome and that he could not bear the company of some persons in the neighbourhood." He disposed of his school there for £400, and resolved to spend the rest of his days in Dublin. While a house was preparing, he occupied the room in the Deanery set apart for his use, and was attacked with an illness which confined him to it for several weeks.¹ Swift's biographer and godson writes that, after his recovery, Dr. Sheridan expressed regret for having been an expensive guest. Mrs. Whiteway, the housekeeper, who was present, observed, "'It is in your power, Doctor, easily to remedy this by removing to another lodging.' Swift was silent. The poor Doctor was quite thunder-struck. As this lady had always professed great friendship for him, and lay under considerable obligations to him, he quickly saw that this remark must have been made by Swift's direction, the

¹ On the 8th of August, 1738, when Dr. Sheridan was probably an inmate of the Deanery, Swift wrote to Alderman Barber, "I will put Dr. Sheridan (the best scholar in both kingdoms) upon taking your receipt for a terrible asthma." (Scott's edition of Swift's Works, vol. xix., p. 153).

silence of the latter confirming him in that opinion. He immediately left the house, in all that anguish of mind, which a heart possessed of the warmest friendship must feel, upon the abrupt breach of one of so long standing and so sincere on his part ; nor did he ever enter it again.”¹

He found temporary accommodation in the house of a former pupil at Rathfarnham, three miles from Dublin. His health grew rapidly worse. He made his will. Shortly after, while at dinner with some friends, the remark was made that the wind was in the east. Dr. Sheridan observed, “ Let it blow east, west, north or south, the immortal soul will take its flight to the distant point.” As he appeared drowsy, his friends deemed it right to leave him for a time and take a walk. They returned at the end of an hour and found that his spirit had departed.

Dr. Sheridan died at 3 o'clock in the afternoon of the 10th of October, 1738. Swift wrote “ A Character ” of his departed friend which Sir Walter Scott truly characterized as “ wanting in generosity.” At that time Swift’s faculties were failing ; within the space of two years they were eclipsed. Before his death, while the dark shadow of insanity brooded over him, Swift repeatedly asked his servant William whether he knew Dr. Sheridan, and when the answer was “ Yes, Sir, very well,” he added, “ Oh ! I lost my right hand when I lost him.”

With the exception of familiar letters to Swift and others, few compositions from Dr. Sheridan’s pen

¹ “ Life ” by Mr. Sheridan, in his edition of Swift’s Works, vol. i., p. 382.

are extant to enable an opinion to be formed as to his capacity as a writer. A translation of the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles published during his lifetime and a translation of the satires of *Persius*, with annotations which appeared after his death, alone remain to justify Swift's high eulogium in a letter to Alderman Barber that Dr. Sheridan was "the best scholar in both kingdoms." The following lines on himself exhibit neatness and skill in versification and frankness in acknowledging his foibles :—

"With music and poetry equally blessed,
A bard thus Apollo most humbly addressed :
Great author of poetry, music, and light,
Instructed by thee I both fiddle and write ;
Yet unheeded I scrape, or I scribble all day,
My tunes are neglected, my verse flung away.
Thy substitute here, Vice-Apollon [Swift] disdains,
To vouch for my numbers or list to my strains.
Thy manual sign he refuses to put
To the airs I produce from the pen, or the gut.
Be thou then propitious, great Phœbus, and grant
Me relief ; or reward to my merit, or want.
Though the Dean and Delany transcendently shine,
O ! brighten one solo, or sonnet of mine.
Make one work immortal ; 'tis all I request ;
Apollo looked pleased, and resolving to jest,
Replied, ' Honest friend, I've considered your case,
Nor dislike your unmeaning and innocent face.
Your petition I grant, the boon is not great,
Your works shall continue and here's the receipt,
On Rondos hereafter your fiddle-strings spend,
Write verses in circles, they never shall end.'"¹

The Earl of Orrery's disparaging remarks con-

¹ The Earl of Orrery's "Remarks on Swift's Life and Writings," pp. 86, 87.

cerning Dr. Sheridan have often been quoted:—"He remained a fiddler, a punster and a wit. Not a day passed without a rebus, an anagram or a madrigal. His pen and his fiddlestick were in continual motion, and yet to little or no purpose." Dr. Sheridan used his pen quite as effectively as the Earl of Orrery, as a passage in a letter to Swift written at Cavan on the 13th of August, 1735, may serve to show:—"We had a county of Armagh rogue, one Mackay, hanged yesterday; Griffith the player never made so merry an exit. He invited his audience the night before with a promise of giving them such a speech from the gallows as they never heard: and indeed he made his words good, for no man was ever merrier at a christening, than he was on the ladder.

"When mounted to his proper height, he turned his face to each side of the gallows, and said in a cheerful manner—"Hah! my friend, am I come to you at last?" Then turning to the people—"Gentlemen, you need not stand so thick, for the farthest shall hear me as easily as the nearest." Upon this a fellow interrupted him and asked him, "Did he know anything of a gray mare that was stolen from him?" "Why, what if I should, would you pay a mass for my soul?" "Ay,—by G—," said the fellow, "will I pay for seven." "Why then," said the criminal, laughing, "I know nothing of your mare." After this he entertained the company with two hours' history of his villanies, in a loud unconcerned voice. At last he concluded with his humble service to one of the inhabitants of the town, desiring that

he might give him a night's lodging, which was all he would trouble him for. He was not the least touched by any liquor ; but soberly and intrepidly desired the hangman to do his office, and at last went off with a joke. Match me this with any of your Englishmen if you can !"¹

There is no doubt about the justice of Sir Walter Scott's statement that "a sincere and disinterested friend of Dean Swift was the good-natured, light-hearted and ingenious Sheridan." Sir Walter also wrote with perfect truth that, when Swift had gathered round him at the Deanery a set of friends in whose conversation he took pleasure, Dr. Sheridan, who was one of them, was "witty himself and the cause of wit in others. His simplicity and characteristic absence of mind were tempered with so much humour and readiness of repartee, that his company was invaluable to the Dean, and their friendship was never interrupted until the increasing irascibility and violence of Swift overcame the patience and offended the honest pride of his respectful friend."²

Dr. Sheridan had many merits which deserve wider and heartier recognition than has yet been accorded to them. His failings have been capriciously magnified. He was singularly and laudably devoid of vanity and dogmatism, of overweening self-confidence and ridiculous self-conceit. No man has ever been more fully conscious of his shortcomings, and none has been more candid in acknow-

¹ Swift's Works, Scott's edition, vol. xviii., pp. 324, 325.

² Swift's Works. vol. i., p. 251.

ledging and honest in trying to make amends for them. Others have possessed his faults without the shrewdness to perceive their origin and the good sense to make partial atonement by an open confession. What he wrote of himself is at once a proof of insight and an admission which excites sympathy and compassion:—"I am famous for giving the best advice and following the worst."

II.

SHERIDAN'S FATHER.

THOMAS SHERIDAN, the younger, was born in 1719, at King's Mint House, Capel Street, Dublin. His godfather was Swift, whose biography he wrote in later years.¹ When Sheridan was prospering, he sent his son, Thomas, to Westminster School, where he distinguished himself, and was elected a King's Scholar as the reward of merit. Fourteen pounds being required for his maintenance, and his father being in monetary straits at the moment, he was recalled to Dublin when he had the prospect of proceeding in due course and under most favourable conditions to Oxford or Cambridge. Happily for him the influence of helpful friends was not

¹ Thomas Sheridan is said to have been baptized in the parish church of St. Mary; but his name has not been found in the register of baptisms by those who searched for it at my request.

wanting at this juncture and to it he owed being chosen of the foundation of Trinity College, Dublin, on the 26th of May, 1735. He was elected a Scholar in 1738 and he took the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1739.

He was diligent in study, and while at Trinity College he was but once guilty of what in after-life he would have styled and lamented as a youthful indiscretion. Indeed, few of his friends, who knew him as grave and saturnine and an avowed foe to frivolity, can have surmised that he was the author of a rollicking farce, *Captain O'Blunder, or the Brave Irishman*. It has often been represented in Dublin and always with applause. The original manuscript is lost, the printed version having been compiled from the recollection of the actors, and the author's own words are not accurately preserved.

Dr. Sheridan wished his son to adopt the honourable vocation of schoolmaster; but he would not. He was equally disinclined to become a clergyman. However, he had a passion for public speaking and entertained the belief that the stage was the best training-school for an orator. When a boy, he had filled parts in the Greek plays performed by his father's most accomplished pupils. When a man, he resolved to make a figure as an actor, and chose the part of Richard III. in which to appear in January, 1743, at the Theatre Royal in his native city. He was so cordially received that he resolved to adopt acting as his profession. The reputation which he acquired in Dublin made it easy for him

to obtain an engagement, the following year, at Drury Lane Theatre.

While in London, he tried to get subscribers to a quarto volume of his father's writings, which consisted, as he stated in a prospectus, dated the 16th of October, 1744,—“1st. Of a translation of Pastor Fido from the Italian of Guarini; 2nd. Poetical pieces on various subjects; and 3rd. Of a choice collection of apophthegms, bon mots and jests.” He further intimated that “most of the pieces were revised and approved by the Rev. Dean Swift, who designed to have recommended them to the world, had they been published while the author was living; but as he died at the time he was preparing them for the press, these works for many years lay dormant in the hands of his executors, from whom they were obtained, and are now made ready for publication by his son, Thomas Sheridan, M.A.” The public did not respond to this appeal and the project was abandoned. Mr. Sheridan mislaid his father's manuscripts. They might have been destroyed accidentally, as no trace of them could be found when a careful search was made in after years.

On returning to Dublin he became manager of the Theatre Royal. His exertions in that responsible position were arduous and his aim was high. He determined that the theatre should be purged of its baser elements and rendered a favourite place of resort for persons of taste and self-respect. Reforms were then urgently needed both behind and before the curtain. In the year 1744, and for a long time afterwards, the performers were miserably remune-

rated. Before Mr. Sheridan was in authority, the money due to them was paid at irregular intervals and sometimes withheld. It is difficult to understand now why an excellent actor like Dyer should have accepted eight shillings weekly and why Isaac Sparks, the principal comedian, was contented with twelve. Ebrington's salary, after that of the manager, was at the highest rate, and he received no more than a guinea. Though the manager could not afford to increase those pittances, yet he resolved that they should be paid punctually, and this was most gratifying to the members of his company.

While semi-starvation was the rule behind the curtain the manners of savages were common in front. A howling mob filled the gallery; intoxicated profligates occupied the pit. It was deemed fine sport to insult and torment the performers, and the actresses were accounted fair game because they could neither defend themselves nor retaliate. Mr. Sheridan had determined to reform the audience as well as the players, and an opportunity occurred of which he was quick to avail himself.

On the evening of the 19th of January, 1746, while Vanbrugh's comedy called *Æsop* was in progress, Mr. Kelly, an inflammable and inebriated young gentleman from Galway, clambered on the stage from the pit and used grossly improper language to Mrs. Dyer, a lady of unimpeachable character. Turning from her, he rushed after Miss Bellamy, filling the part of Doris, who took refuge in her dressing-room and bolted the door. While Kelly

was trying to force it open, Mr. Sheridan appeared and, instead of winking at this playful freak, as had been customary on similar occasions, he ordered the attendants to conduct the disturber back to his place in the pit. Kelly took a basket of oranges from a girl and pelted Mr. Sheridan with them, calling out that he was a rascal and a scoundrel. He retorted, with perfect truth, "I am as good a gentleman as you are." This aroused Kelly's wrath and, after the play was over, he went to the manager's room, repeated his offensive epithets and received a well-deserved thrashing.

On the following day Kelly informed his boon companions that Mr. Sheridan had proclaimed himself as good a gentleman as anyone in the theatre. This excited them, and they agreed to join him in wreaking vengeance for what they deemed an intolerable insult. Their first measure was to threaten Mr. Sheridan with death, yet they magnanimously contented themselves with wrecking the theatre and destroying the theatrical wardrobe. Kelly was given into custody, put on his trial for assault, sentenced to imprisonment for three months and to pay a fine of £500. After passing a week in prison, he made an appeal to which Mr. Sheridan responded with laudable and magnanimous alacrity, the result being that, owing to his intercession, the fine was remitted and the prisoner set free.

The Kelly riot was the main topic of conversation, and the subject of many pamphlets and articles in newspapers. A few verses and a pamphlet which came to the manager's knowledge gave him heartfelt

pleasure. In both, his conduct was defended and extolled. He did not rest till discovering that the writer was Frances Chamberlaine, a young lady three years his junior, who was the daughter of a popular clergyman. They became personally acquainted and their marriage took place in 1747. They were well matched; their wedded life was passed in unalloyed and uninterrupted affection. Though the cleverer of the two, the wife had a great respect for her husband's mental capacity. That he was an able though eccentric man is as indisputable as that she was a fascinating woman.

The manager of the Theatre Royal had seldom reason to repine during the eight years that he endeavoured to cater for playgoers. He was esteemed by the public; he associated with the most notable persons in Dublin, and he was a frequent guest at the Castle when the Duke of Dorset was Lord-Lieutenant. Though carefully eschewing politics, his intimacy with those in authority was regarded with suspicion by the super-sensitive and over-exacting patriots of his time, and when James Miller's tragedy entitled *Mahomet the Impostor* was revived on the 2nd of February, 1754, some lines in it reflecting upon the rulers of the land were frantically applauded, and Mr. Digges, who spoke them in the part of Alcanor, was called upon to repeat them. Mr. Sheridan disapproved of the actor having responded to the summons, and he delivered a short lecture on the subject to the members of his company, saying, "I lay it down as a maxim, that the business of an actor is to divest himself, as far as possible, of his

private sentiments, and to enter, with all the spirit he is master of, into the character he represents; and this is an indisputable claim which the public, in general, have upon him. But if an actor, in order to please a part of that public, should by an unusual emphasis, gesture or significant look, mark out a passage in his part (which at another juncture he would pass by lightly) as a party-stroke, he in that instance steps out of his feigned character into his natural one, than which nothing can be more insolent to the audience, or more calculated to bring disapprobation and disgrace not only upon himself, but on all his brethen."¹

Just and wise as are these remarks, evincing Mr. Sheridan's perfect comprehension of an actor's position and duty, they were most obnoxious to Mr. Digges, who resented being lectured and made the unwilling recipient of good advice. Moreover, he bore the manager a grudge for seeming to doubt his word, and he watched for an opportunity to revenge himself. This occurred on the 2nd of March, 1754, when the same play was again performed. A call was made for a repetition of the following unpoetical lines, which had been frantically applauded before :

"If, ye powers divine !
Ye mark the movements of this nether world,
And bring them to account, crush, crush those vipers ;
Who singled out by the community
To guard their rights, shall, for a grasp of ore
Or paltry office, sell them to the foe."

¹ "Memoirs of Mrs. Frances Sheridan," pp. 55, 56.

Mr. Digges intimated that he was forbidden to speak the lines a second time, and a call arose for the Manager, who had left the theatre. After an interval, during which Mr. Sheridan did not return and apologize, a young man in the pit stood up and shouted—"God bless his Majesty King George!" The loyal sentiment, and preconcerted signal, having been heartily cheered as the watchword for action, the dissatisfied and patriotic audience proceeded to destroy the furniture and fittings of the theatre. An energetic attempt to burn it to the ground was frustrated through a mere accident. However, the conspirators had the satisfaction of reflecting, when enjoying their well-earned repose, that they had beggared Mr. Sheridan.¹

While the work of destruction was in progress, Mrs. Sheridan remained at home fearing for her husband's life, her own condition at the time rendering any shock or anxiety very serious. The consequence was that a boy born soon afterwards, and named Sackville, did not long survive. How to support his family gave Mr. Sheridan great concern. He had no lack of sympathy, and the Lord-Lieutenant rightly interpreted the feelings of the public when he offered Mr. Sheridan a pension of £300 by way

¹ Digges was proud of his share in the outrage. Thirty years later he had a benefit in Dublin, and then he chose the play of *Mahomet*. It was stated in the play-bill that "this was the play that had been the ruin of Mr. Sheridan in 1754." He took the part of Alcanor, and, after declaiming with intense energy the lines given above, he stopped for the applause, which, to the credit of the audience, was sensibly withheld. His malice had overreached itself.

of compensation for his losses and in recognition of his services to the stage. He declined the pension, being the only one of his contemporaries who, by so doing, displayed a virtue which would have immortalized a Stoic. The reasons which he assigned for his refusal did him credit :—"Should I accept this pension," he said in substance, "I shall confirm all the calumnies to which I have been subjected, while if I do my utmost to retrieve my position, I may hereafter regain public favour."

He let the theatre for two years and started for England, after issuing an "Appeal to the Public" wherein he wrote that he had expended nine thousand pounds in renovating and improving the Theatre Royal, that he was obliged to part with it for a time in most disadvantageous circumstances, and that the fruits of eight laborious years had been blasted in a night, adding—"He wakes as from a dream, and finds that the best and most vigorous of his years have been employed to no purpose. . . . Persecuted by implacable enemies, abandoned by many pretended friends, who have given him up without so much as hearing what he had to say, and daily experiencing the blackest instances of ingratitude from persons most obliged to him, he must now look out for a new course of life, a new country, and new friends."

His lot was assuredly hard and the treatment to which he had been subjected was alike cowardly and cruel. He deserved the thanks of his fellows; he received the return for which those who honestly serve them ought to be prepared. He had the

satisfaction, however, of knowing that he had elevated the stage in Dublin, and there is no vain-glory in the following narrative of his achievements :—" All ranks of people crowded to a theatre where the amusement was on a rational footing, and where they were assured of enjoying it without interruption. There have been sometimes more than thirty clergymen in the pit at a time, many of them Deans and Doctors of Divinity ; though formerly none of that order had ever entered the doors, unless a few who skulked in the gallery disguised. Persons venerable for age, station, and character appeared frequently in the boxes and gave a sanction to the reformation. In a short space of time afterwards, many well-educated young men, and women of good characters, entered cheerfully into a profession wherein they were no longer liable to insults ; insomuch that the Manager could boast, that during the space of a few years there were more gentlemen, who were such both by birth and a liberal education, upon his stage, than all the theatres in England had produced, from the time of Booth, Wilks and Cibber to that ; as also a greater number of actresses, whose characters were entirely free from stain. At the time that he was obliged to quit the theatre, he was about to give a substantial proof to the world of the number of young gentlemen liberally trained who at that time belonged to his company, by playing one of the comedies of Terence in the original."¹

¹ Gilbert's "History of the City of Dublin," vol. ii., pp. 86, 87, 92. The playhouse of which Mr. Sheridan was the Manager

Mr. Sheridan acted at Covent Garden Theatre while in London. The Rev. Charles Churchill was the most critical among the playgoers of that time, the result being shown when he wrote this passage in the *Rosciad* :—

“Next follows Sheridan ;—a doubtful name,
As yet unsettled in the rank of fame !

* * * * *

Just his conceptions, natural and great,
His feelings strong, his words enforced with weight ;
Was speech-famed Quin himself to hear him speak
Envy would drive the colour from his cheek ;
But step-dame Nature, niggard of her grace,
Denied the social powers of voice and face,
Fixed in one frame of features, glare of eye,
Passions, like chaos, in confusion lie :
In vain the wonders of his skill are tried
To form distinctions Nature hath denied.
His voice no touch of harmony admits,
Irregularly deep and shrill by fits ;
The two extremes appear like man and wife,
Coupled together for the sake of strife.
His action's always strong, but sometimes such
That candour must declare he acts too much.
Why must impatience fall three paces back ?
Why paces three, return to the attack ?
• Why is the right leg, too, forbid to stir,
Unless in motion semi-circular ?

* * * * *

But, spite of all defects, his glories rise,
And art, by judgment formed, with Nature vies.
Behold him sound the depth of Hubert's soul,
While in his own, contending passions roll ;

was pulled down in 1815, and the Catholic church of St. Michael and St. John was erected on the site. The vaults in which the dead are now placed partly formed the pit of the theatre.

View the whole scene, with critic judgment scan,
And then deny him merit if you can.
Where he falls short, 'tis Nature's fault alone ;
Where he succeeds, the merit's all his own."¹

Churchill concludes his poem with a sketch of Garrick, to whom he gives the palm as an actor. He allows the next place to Mr. Sheridan. Contemporaries of Mr. Sheridan agreed with the decision of Churchill. Mr. John Taylor was one of them. He characterizes Mr. Sheridan as "a grave, sensible and intelligent man, polite, but reserved in his manners;" he adds, after having seen him in the parts of Hamlet and Brutus,—“Churchill has given a just description of him in his *Rosciad*.”² Both of these actors were already notable men in their profession, and each had an opinion of himself which, if not overweening, was far from being modest. In 1743, when Garrick was rising into fame in London, and Mr. Sheridan was enjoying great popularity in Dublin, Garrick invited Sheridan to play at Drury Lane Theatre. The proposal was politely declined on the ground that the two could not interchange parts and that, in Mr. Sheridan's opinion, they would clash so much in regard to characters, as to render it impossible for them to perform in the same house. He made a counter-proposal which, as he stated, might appear extraordinary, yet which he considered would prove to be mutually advantageous, adding,—“If you could be brought to divide your immortality

¹ *The Rosciad*: “British Poets,” vol. lxi., pp. 77, 78.

² “Records of my Life,” vol. ii., p. 26.

with me, we might, like Castor and Pollux, appear always in different hemispheres . . . in plain English, what think you of dividing the kingdoms between us; to play one winter in London and another in Dublin?"¹

Mrs. Delany wrote to Mrs. Dewes on the 13th of February, 1745-6, "Sheridan is here in great reputation;" on the 10th of November, 1750, she said that "he acted Macbeth very well," and on the 18th of January, 1752, she noted that "Mr. Sheridan is a *just* actor, but rather a *dull one*."² At a later period in Mr. Sheridan's career, Dr. Johnson wrote to Bennet Langton on the 28th of October, 1760:—"Let me hear from you again . . . and in return I will tell you the success of Sheridan, who at this instant is playing Cato, and has already played Richard twice. He had more company the second than the first night, and will make, I believe, a good figure in the whole, though his faults seem to be very many; some of natural deficiency, and some of laborious affectation. He has, I think, no power of assuming either that dignity or elegance which some men, who have little of either in common life, can exhibit on the stage. His voice when strained is displeasing, and when low is not always heard. He seems to think too much on the audience, and turns his face too often to the galleries."³

¹ "The Private Correspondence of David Garrick," vol. i., p. 15.

² "Autobiography and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany," vol. ii., pp. 424, 616; vol. iii., p. 80.

³ Boswell's "Life of Johnson," Hill's edition, vol. i., p. 358.

Mr. Sheridan returned to Dublin after an absence of two years, and resumed the management of the Theatre Royal. He was welcomed by his warm-hearted countrymen with as great ardour as they had displayed in begging him. He melted many playgoers to tears with a spoken apology. It is not clear why he should have asked forgiveness from those who had compassed his ruin. His chief error of omission was not having been present in the theatre while the work of destruction went merrily on. The proceedings on his return from voluntary exile delighted contemporary chroniclers, one of whom characterized them as the happy sequel to a lovers' quarrel. Mr. Sheridan may have thought that those whom he had mistaken for personal enemies had completely succeeded in dissembling their love.

This treaty of peace, or renewal of affection, lasted twelve months. At the end of that short period, another actor had enshrined himself in the fickle hearts of Mr. Sheridan's genial countrymen. This was Spranger Barry, for whom a theatre was built and to whom the best among Mr. Sheridan's company offered their services.

Spranger Barry having become popular, Mr. Sheridan had to choose between starving in Ireland with his wife and children, and migrating to England in the hope of earning a livelihood without having to dread being treated as a divinity one day and playfully reduced to beggary on the next. His departure from Ireland was embittered by the thought that he would be far distant from Quilca, the house

which his father had acquired by marriage with Elizabeth MacFadden, the house in which his father had edited the *Intelligencer* in concert with Swift, in which Swift had written *Gulliver's Travels* and planned the *Drapier's Letters*, and in which he had himself dispensed a generous hospitality during the brighter days of his career on the Dublin stage.

Mr. Sheridan once gave an entertainment at Quilca which paralleled the extraordinary banquet, after the manner of the ancients, in Smollett's *Peregrine Pickle*. Some of his guests had maintained that the cookery in the good old Irish days was superior to that of civilized times. Being a considerate and liberal host, he resolved to gratify the traditionary tastes of his friends by causing a dinner to be prepared and served after the custom of their rude forefathers. The dining-room itself was prepared for the occasion, fresh rushes being substituted for the modern and manufactured carpet. Two dishes were provided which had never appeared on the degenerate tables of his contemporaries, and these were believed by some of his friends to be supreme among the triumphs of the culinary art. The one was swilled mutton, consisting of a sheep roasted whole, inside of which was a lamb, the lamb having been stuffed with a hare and rabbits. The other was a goose which had a duck for stuffing. When these dainty dishes were tasted, the juiciness of the mutton was reluctantly praised, while the high flavour of the goose was not loudly condemned by those who thought it a patriotic duty to eat

national fare. But the praise had a false ring and, when a second course followed in which turbot and venison figured, those who had painfully learned the character of genuine old Irish cookery expressed their bitter disappointment.¹

Mr. Sheridan did not regard Ireland as his home after 1758. If he owed much to it, he owed more in it. A compliment which was paid to him by the Irish Legislature excited Dr. Johnson's admiration. A Bill for the relief of insolvent debtors having been introduced into the Irish House of Commons in 1766, a petition was then presented by Mr. Samuel Whyte to include Mr. Sheridan's name, and not only was the prayer granted, but a motion was made and agreed to unanimously that the facts should be accepted without the petitioner being put upon his oath. It was accounted a strange thing that a creditor should strive to lighten the liabilities of a debtor. In this case the creditor acted as the debtor's useful friend, and his sacrifice had the result of hindering dissentient creditors from pressing their claims.

Mr. Sheridan's London residence in 1758 was in Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, and it became

¹ Mrs. Delany has chronicled a contemporary dinner at the rooms of Dr. Clements, in Trinity College. At the top of the table there was the largest turbot she had ever beheld; at the bottom roast veal, and pea-soup in the middle. A whole fat pig was on one side, a shoulder of mutton both hashed and grilled on the other. A second course consisted of grouse, partridges and lobsters, and four dishes which are unnamed, "the banquet being completed with raspberry cream and Chili strawberries" ("Correspondence of Mrs. Delany," vol. iii., p. 501).

the resort of many persons whose acquaintance was worth cultivating; Dr. Young and Dr. Johnson, Wedderburn, Lord Shelburne and Samuel Richardson being conspicuous among them. He became very intimate with Dr. Johnson, and it was owing to his solicitation, conveyed through Wedderburn to the Earl of Bute, that, in 1762, Johnson obtained the pension of £300 which relieved his necessities and rendered him comfortable for the remainder of his life. Six years had then elapsed since the publication of the Dictionary which made Johnson famous. Another Dictionary, specially designed to show the manner in which each word should be pronounced, was undertaken by Mr. Sheridan. Its plan was thus described by him in 1762 :—" A dissertation on the causes which occur of the difficulties in learning the English tongue; with a scheme for publishing an English grammar and dictionary upon a plan entirely new; the object of which shall be to facilitate the attainment of the English tongue, and establish a perpetual standard of pronunciation. Addressed to a certain noble Lord." The nobleman in question was the Earl of Bute, who was then Prime Minister. He was so favourably impressed that, in November, 1762, Mrs. Sheridan was able to inform a friend in Dublin of the King having granted her husband a pension of £200, "merely as an encouragement to his undertaking." When Dr. Johnson heard the news, he testily and foolishly exclaimed :—" What! have they given him a pension? Then it is time for me to give up mine." He added, after a pause, during which his

common sense had resumed its sway,—“However, I am glad that Mr. Sheridan has a pension, for he is a very good man.” An officious tale-bearer repeated to him the first and offensive part of Johnson’s remark, the result being that he declined to meet Johnson again and, in his *Life of Swift*, sneeringly referred to him as “a writer of gigantic fame in these days of little men.”

Mr. Sheridan was a fertile writer and a most enthusiastic educational reformer. Out of the fifteen works from his pen, but few are known even by name to any except those who have observingly walked in the by-ways of English literature. The improvement of education was the object which he had at heart. To promote the more careful study of the English tongue was his supreme desire. He held that the cultivation of oratory should form a part of the training of all who were destined for public life and who were ambitious of shining among public men. He lectured on these topics at London and Bristol, Bath and Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh. The University of Oxford “incorporated” him as Master of Arts on the 28th of November, 1758; the sister University conferred a like honour upon him on the 16th of March, 1759.

On the 8th of July, 1761, he received the freedom of the City of Edinburgh.¹ He delivered a course of sixteen lectures in St. Paul’s Chapel,

¹ In the “Memoirs of Frances Sheridan,” at p. 249, it is said that the freedom of the city of Edinburgh “was presented to him by the hands of Dr. Robertson, the historian.” This is an error.

Carrubber's Close, to three hundred gentlemen, "the most eminent in the country for rank and abilities."¹ James Boswell, who had not then succeeded in making himself known to Dr. Johnson, was one of Mr. Sheridan's pupils, and Boswell considered that he did credit to his teacher, because Dr. Johnson had deigned to say,—“Sir, your pronunciation is not offensive.” While Manager of the Theatre Royal in Dublin, Mr. Thomas Sheridan put Home's *Douglas* on the stage in the hope that his fellow-citizens would be favourably impressed with the play. It was applauded for two nights and hissed off the scene on the third. Thereupon Sheridan had a gold medal struck which he presented to Home “for having enriched the stage with a perfect tragedy.” In this opinion the Edinburgh playgoers entirely coincided.

The warmth and perseverance with which Mr. Sheridan urged the study of oratory brought upon him much undeserved ridicule. Dr. Johnson uttered uncomplimentary things about him, as Dr. Parr is said to have done also; and their disparaging phrases have survived, while others of an opposite cast are forgotten.

It is possible that the honour was granted at Dr. Robertson's suggestion. George Lind, the Lord Provost, or Gilbert Laurie, the Dean of Guild, presided at the ceremony. I have been favoured, through the kindness of Mr. David Douglas, the eminent publisher, with the following extract from the Council Record: “Appoint the Dean of Guild and his Council to admit and receive the Rt. Hon. Sholtoe, Lord Aberdour, and Thomas Sheridan, Esquire, to be Burgesses and Guild Brethren of the City in the most ample form.”

¹ “Life of Adam Smith,” by John Rae, p. 119.

Dr. Parr is reported to have affirmed that he was "a wrong-headed whimsical man." Dr. Johnson said, "Sheridan cannot bear me. I bring his declamation to a point. I ask him a plain question, 'what do you mean to teach?' Besides, sir, what influence can Mr. Sheridan have on the language of this great country, by his narrow exertions? Sir, it is burning a farthing candle at Dover to show light at Calais." This remark, though picturesque, is neither apposite nor conclusive. Mr. Sheridan's success was disproportionate to his merits; he was not fully appreciated as a teacher during his life-time, and he has been undervalued since.

He lived to see his younger son, whose splendid talents produced an inadequate impression on his own mind, become one of the most popular men of his time. He discerned the talent latent in the young actress who afterwards was glorified as Mrs. Siddons, and who termed him "the father of my fortune and my fame." He died at Margate on the 14th of August, 1788, when contemplating a voyage to Lisbon in search of health. His remains lie under the central aisle of St. Peter's church, in the parish of that name adjoining Margate. It may be said of him, as Dr. Johnson remarked to the Rev. Dr. Maxwell, that "he neither wanted parts nor literature; but that his vanity and Quixotism obscured his merits." The truth is that he was a man of unquestionable ability and that he is not the first who has been deficient in the art of turning his capacity and endowments to the best use. His name will not be forgotten or contemned so long as

the names of his scholarly father, of his very clever wife and of his brilliant son are remembered and cherished.

III.

SHERIDAN'S MOTHER.

FRANCES CHAMBERLAINE was born at Dublin in 1724, where Dr. Philip Chamberlaine, her father, was the rector of St. Nicholas Without. He was of English extraction; her mother, whose maiden name was Anastasia White, was an English lady who died soon after giving birth to Frances, her fifth child. Dr. Chamberlaine was a popular preacher and an esteemed clergyman. He is reputed to have been a great humorist, and his great-granddaughter considers that he gave proof of humour by forbidding his daughter Frances to be taught the alphabet and the art of writing. He defended this eccentric decision on the ground that girls who were educated wasted their time in sending or receiving love-letters. His grandson's knowledge of this may have induced him to make Sir Anthony Absolute say to Mrs. Malaprop:—"Had I a thousand daughters, by Heaven! I'd as soon have them taught the black art as their alphabet!" Frances's elder brother, Walter, secretly taught her to read and write, and finding her eager to learn, he instructed her in Latin also. Her second brother, Richard, taught her botany, and she turned her knowledge of herbs to good

account when doctoring the poor of her father's parish.

Frances Chamberlaine was as anxious as Frances Burney to profit by her accomplishments, and at the age of fifteen she wrote a romance entitled *Eugenia and Adelaide*. Her father never heard of this work, which was not published during his lifetime or that of Frances herself. After posthumous publication, it was adapted for the stage as a comic opera by Mrs. Lefanu, her elder daughter. Having produced a work of fiction, she next composed two sermons. It is not recorded whether they were seen by her father; it is possible, however, that her elder brother, who had been her teacher and who was a clergyman, may have encouraged her to write these sermons, and he may have gratified her by preaching them.

Dr. Chamberlaine died soon after his daughter had attained womanhood. For some time before death his faculties were decayed. He was as averse to Frances going to see a play as he was to her reading and writing; however, when he could no longer watch over her movements, she used her freedom to accompany her brothers to the theatre, where she saw and fell in love with Mr. Thomas Sheridan. She became one of his warm but unknown champions when the Kelly riot was the talk of Dublin, and she penned verses and prose in his praise. Six out of the nine stanzas from "The Owls: a Fable," will serve to show the character of her rhymed defence:

(4.)

"Now hear a tale, a moral too,
 Allow it poor, or pretty.
 The Owls, one day, (if Fame
 says true)
 Composed a sage com-
 mittee.

(5.)

"'Twas there resolved in cool
 debate,
 Each offering his true sense,
 That Phœbus, source of light
 and heat,
 Was nothing but a nuisance.

(6.)

"To whom the glorious lamp
 of day
 In mildest radiance spoke :
 'Shall I withdraw my genial
 ray
 Because your vigil's broke ?

(7.)

" 'Shall Nature's frame and
 Nature's laws
 By me be unattended,
 Because, forsooth, a noble
 cause !
 An owl or two's offended !

(8.)

" 'O sons of gloom ! get
 brighter sense,
 More conscionably speak !
 Why should my beams be
 less intense
 Because your eyes are
 weak ?

(9.)

" 'The fault is yours, if faults
 you see,
 The punishing be mine ;
 And my complete revenge
 shall be
 I still will rise and shine.' "

Mr. Sheridan succeeded in removing the mask of anonymity, expressed his gratitude to the gentle and enthusiastic writer, and asked her to render him happier still, the result being, as has been already stated,¹ their marriage in 1747, the Rev. Walter Chamberlaine performing the ceremony.

None could be better mated than this couple. She was an excellent manager of a household as well as a devoted wife and most affectionate mother, and her husband found in her a true sympathizer and helper during his many struggles and privations.

¹ See *ante*, p. 22.

After they had been forced to migrate to England in 1758, Mrs. Sheridan's charming qualities caused many noteworthy personages to enjoy visiting their house in London. Dr. Johnson, who always displayed a strong liking for the pretty and congenial wives of his friends, was as greatly smitten with Mrs. Sheridan as with Mrs. Thrale. When his contemptuous and ill-mannered remarks about Mr. Sheridan's pension had produced a rupture, he missed the pleasant evenings that he had become accustomed to enjoy in Henrietta Street. He had previously informed Bennet Langton:—"I wish him well; and among other reasons because I like his wife." After the breach, he was deprived, as Boswell puts it, "of one of his most agreeable resources of amusement in his lonely evenings, for Sheridan's well-informed and bustling mind never suffered conversation to stagnate, and Mrs. Sheridan was a most agreeable companion to an intellectual man. She was sensible, ingenious, unassuming, yet communicative. I recollect, with satisfaction, many hours which I passed with her under the hospitable roof of her husband, who was to me a very kind friend."¹

Samuel Richardson numbered Mrs. Sheridan among his heartiest and most attached admirers. She delighted in his writings. He praised her unpublished novel and advised her to make a second attempt on a larger scale. The suggestion was adopted, and she gave up what time she could spare

¹ Boswell's "Life of Johnson," G. B. Hill's edition, vol. i., p. 389.

to writing the *Memoirs of Sidney Bidulph*. A letter which she sent to him from Dublin has a double interest, inasmuch as it exhibits her manner in addressing him and gives some particulars about her husband's position in Dublin when she wrote, though it was not foreseen by either that Mr. Thomas Sheridan would soon be compelled to quit that city again:—"Dublin, November 20th, 1756. A month in Dublin without writing to Mr. Richardson and that too after so kind, so condescending an invitation on his part! . . . The truth is, since our arrival here Mr. Sheridan has not had a single hour unemployed in very necessary, tho' very disagreeable business; perhaps your goodness may ask me what I have been doing, why to answer you truly I have had my share too—but I dare not enlarge on these particulars for fear of falling into the error I disclaimed at my first setting out; let me hasten then to tell you something of our present system of theatrical and domestic affairs.

"Mr. Sheridan on his return found he had a more formidable enemy to combat against than any who had ever yet attacked him, an enemy neither to be repelled by force nor overcome by stratagem, and yet an enemy that he has been obliged to enter the lists with, and this was no other than a very poor and a most depopulated town, for such is Dublin at present. He has however been too well used to difficulties to let this wholly dishearten him, and he reassumed the reins of government in his little theatrical Kingdom with great alacrity of spirit. Having reformed many things in his own territories

he thought it most prudent before he again launched out into a troubled sea, to conciliate the minds of the few remaining malcontents, for this purpose on his first appearance he made a short speech to the audience wherein in a very few words he modestly vindicated himself from the imputation of ever having intended to give public offence. As this was the utmost that was desired by any one and more than was expected by all they would scarce permit him to finish what he had to say, and indeed one half of it was drowned in their clamorous approbation.

"I believe almost everybody of any faction that was left in Town was at the theatre that night, and I find fully verified that wise saying, 'a word spoken in season how good is it.' Since that we have gone on with great peace and tranquillity, the people are very glad to have their entertainment restored to them, and only want to be a little richer to purchase it cheerfully every night ; but this circumstance calamitous as it is in general gives to us this advantage in regard to the Theatre, for I never remember to have seen such constant genteel audiences, but the cause is too melancholy a one for the effects to produce any pleasure, and it will call up all Mr. Sheridan's attention and diligence to get thro' so unfavourable a season with any tolerable advantage.

"As for my own little family, the joy of seeing them again has been embittered by the illness of my youngest children [Richard Brinsley and his sister Alicia] they have both had fevers, and are but

now recovering; our present abode we find on many accounts so inconvenient and in an air so confined that we have been looking out for a little retreat where the children and I may breathe more freely and Mr. Sheridan be more master of his time, such a portion of it, I mean, as he is not unavoidably obliged to pass in Dublin. We have at last fixed on a little place in the neighbourhood of the Dean of Down's villa, to which I believe we shall remove next week, and here Mr. Sheridan hopes to find time himself to tell you how much he esteems, how much he honours you, meanwhile he commissions me to say thus much for him. . . .

"Pray, Sir, tell good Mrs. Richardson that I love her for her own sake as much as I do for yours; take that, Sir. Miss Richardson, Miss Patty, Miss Nancy, and Miss Sally have all a just claim to my warmest affection, and they have it. Charles [Francis] talks of Parson's Green every day, and is a sincere and constant lover of your whole family, indeed I should disown him if he were not. Be pleased, Sir, when you see Mr. Duncumb to make our compliments to him and to the amiable Miss Prescott. When I get to my cottage at Glassnevin, I will do myself the pleasure of writing to them both. I can't bear the thoughts of being forgotten by persons I value."¹

Mrs. Thomas Sheridan finished her second novel in 1756, and she placed the manuscript in Richardson's hands. It received his approbation and he

¹ "The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson," vol. iv., pp. 145, 150.

arranged for its publication by Dodsley, which took place on the 12th of March, 1761. The dedication ran :—"The editor of the following sheets takes this opportunity of paying the tribute due to exemplary goodness and distinguished genius, when found united in one person, by inscribing these memoirs to the author of *Clarissa* and *Sir Charles Grandison*."

Sidney Bidulph took the Town by storm. A second edition was published three months after the first had appeared, and many have followed since. The Monthly Reviewers, whose judgments were as greatly respected or feared then as those of the Edinburgh Reviewers were forty-five years later, pronounced the book to be far superior to those by "brother" authors. The applause of authoritative critics was re-echoed by the public. It long continued to be the favourite among novels. Lord North praised it most warmly. Charles James Fox said it was the best novel of the age. Dr. Johnson thought the plot too harrowing, while he commended the writer's skill. He should not have withheld approval of the humour, which is as genuine and excellent as the pathos. The Abbé Prévost translated it into French ; a dramatized version was put on the Paris stage ; it pleased as a play as well as a book, and thus the success of *Sidney Bidulph* was twofold in France.

Mrs. Sheridan was extremely surprised as well as gratified ; her own estimate of the book was far below its merits. Indeed, it might never have been printed if Richardson had been unfriendly in his

view and decision. When he wrote to her in 1756 expressing his admiration of *Sidney Bidulph*, she replied in terms which are unmarred by the slightest trace of affectation :—" I think vanity under a show of modesty is, of all lights it can appear in, the most contemptible! How ridiculous then would it be for me to say, I don't think the novel worth printing, after it has had your approbation. Before it was honoured with that, I looked upon it as a thing wrote in a manner so different from the present taste, that I did not suppose anybody would read it."¹

The moral of the book is that virtue is not always rewarded, the unfortunate heroine having alone the consciousness of acting uprightly to sustain her under innumerable woes. Much ingenuity is displayed in afflicting her with new trials. The sympathizing reader who pities her, and thinks that she is cruelly tormented, cannot deny the truth of the picture and the cleverness of its delineator.

The welcome which she had received as a novelist, made Mrs. Sheridan ambitious of shining as a playwright. Accordingly, she composed a comedy entitled *The Discovery*, which she read to Garrick, who gladly listened to anything from the lips of a woman who was one of his favourites. Its merit impressed him, and he requested permission to produce the comedy at Drury Lane Theatre, promising, if the opportunity were accorded, to play the difficult part of Sir Anthony Branville. Mrs. Sheridan was as

¹ "The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson," vol. iv., pp. 143, 144.

pleased to grant the boon as she was to be solicited for it. Her feelings were expressed in a letter written from London on the 29th of November, 1762, to a friend in Dublin :—" My first theatrical essay has so far met with an almost unprecedented success. Most of us poor authors find a difficulty in getting our pieces on the stage, and perhaps are obliged to dangle after managers a season or two : I, on the contrary, was solicited to give mine, as soon as it was seen."

The comedy was first performed on the 5th of February, 1763, and it was frequently represented during the winter, the loud applause with which it was received on the opening night being repeated on subsequent occasions.¹ The part of Sir Anthony Branville, a leading one, was the last which Garrick added to his stock ; though differing from others in which his superiority was acknowledged, he made his mark in it, and contemporary critics classed it among his best.

Sir Anthony is as fantastic a lover as was the Knight of the Rueful Countenance, and he appears to be as much at the mercy of the lady on whom his affections are concentrated as Don Quixote was in relation to Dulcinea del Toboso, with this essential difference, however, that his lady-love has the air of a real personage, whereas the other was a phantom of her lover's imagination. Lord Medway, another leading part, was filled by Mr. Sheridan. The lighter characters, such as the young and newly-wedded Sir Henry Flutter and his giddy wife, are

¹ "Memoirs of Mrs. Frances Sheridan," pp. 217, 218.

drawn with a little of Congreve's exquisite touch ; indeed, the whole comedy bears the impress of a fresh yet not unskilful hand. In the prologue, which Garrick spoke and may have written, the following lines occur, and they fairly characterize the play :—

"Our humble muse no charms of art can boast,
But simple nature and plain sense at most.
Perhaps some character—a moral too ;
And what is stranger still—the story's new !
No borrowed thoughts throughout the piece are shown,
But what the author writes is all her own."

A second comedy, *The Dupe*, was written by Mrs. Sheridan while the first was delighting the Town. Those who listened to a reading of it at her house expressed the opinion that it was equal in merit and attraction to *The Discovery*. However, *The Dupe* was performed for the first and last time on the 10th of December, 1763. Miss Lefanu assigns the failure to a cabal instigated by Mrs. Clive, who is said to have been mortally offended with Mr. Sheridan because he refused to play Chamont to her Monimia in Otway's tragedy of *The Orphan*. When a play is not applauded by the public, the true reason is one which its author will never admit, and it is that the play is bad.

There is little ingenuity in the plot, and no character is either original or noteworthy. Instead of honestly remarking that she had fallen below her own standard, Mrs. Sheridan's friends consoled with her on the unfair treatment of which, as they childishly alleged, she had been the victim. She received a token of sympathy alike rare and

welcome and, moreover, thoroughly practical. It came from Mr. Millar, the bookseller, who had paid her handsomely for the right to publish the comedy ; he wrote to say that its rapid sale was "an undeniable proof of its merit," and enclosed a further payment of one hundred pounds. Sympathy in this form is very precious. Mrs. Sheridan composed an *Ode to Patience* to show how philosophically she could bear misfortune. The first three out of the sixty lines run thus :—

"Unawed by threats, unmoved by force,
My steady soul pursues her course,
Collected, calm, resigned."

Her resignation and calmness were rendered the easier owing to Mr. Millar's liberality.

After the failure of her play, Mrs. Sheridan accompanied her husband on a lecturing tour to Bristol and Bath. He was doubly pleased with his reception at Bristol, the audience being thoroughly appreciative, while a young lady honoured him with laudatory verses. This was a repetition of what had occurred in Dublin when Frances Chamberlaine was young, enthusiastic, unmarried and full of admiration for his conduct as manager of the Theatre Royal. The Bristol young lady, who was then in her sixteenth year, became famous and opulent as Hannah More. Mr. Sheridan met and complimented her. Being chary of eulogy as she grew older and more critical, she put on record this opinion of him as a lecturer : "Mr. Sheridan was sensible, but pedantic as usual. He abused all the

English poets, because none of them had written to the heart."¹

Mrs. Sheridan had a fine voice and a passion for music. While at Bath she took lessons in singing from the fashionable teacher of whom Dr. Burney wrote :—"Linley loved music, was a studious man, equally versed in theory and practice. Having a large family he pointed his studies to singing, and became the best master of his day. He was a masterly performer on the harpsichord, and a good composer." This praise, though extremely high, is trustworthy. Mrs. Sheridan's association with Mr. Linley led to a personal acquaintance with his family, and the intimacy thus begun had important consequences. The Linley family possessed many attractions. The singing of Mr. Linley's daughters was remarkable from their early years, while his son Tom, when still a youth, played on the violin with the precision and charm of a master. A gentleman who had been struck with the voices of the girls, asked this boy "Are you too musical, my little man?" Tom innocently replied—"Oh! yes, we are all geniuses!" The abode of the Linley family was pleasingly and aptly designated by Dr. Burney, "a nest of nightingales."

In the autumn of 1764, Mr. Sheridan went to France with his wife, his two daughters, Alicia and

¹ "Memoirs of Hannah More," vol. i., p. 395. Mr. Sheridan did not grow less prejudiced in later years. I have found the following passage in a letter from his daughter Elizabeth to her sister in Dublin, written at Bath in June, 1786: "I will endeavour to get Cowper's poems; but I must enjoy them alone, as my father will not allow we have poets, or painters, or musicians at present."

Elizabeth Hume Crawford and his elder son, Charles Francis. He journeyed in quest of a place where he could live cheaply and comfortably. After passing ten days in Paris, the party proceeded southward without having determined where to settle. A halt was made at Blois, on the Loire. While the two girls were walking along the streets, a very old maid named Hemin, who was English by birth, saw them and inferred from their dress that they were fellow-countrywomen. Her father had been an officer in the service of King James the Second, and had followed him to France. After his death the French Government generously awarded her a small pension. She survived him so many years that her name was struck out of the pension roll for the reason that she could not possibly be alive. Her native tongue had become so strange to her that she spoke it imperfectly, telling Mr. Sheridan that she was a "poor little English girl." Her anxiety that he should elect to remain in Blois determined him to do so and, through her recommendation, he found a suitable cottage and garden on the river's bank. He made an appropriate return to the destitute and forlorn Miss Hemin by interesting the English visitors in her case and collecting for her use the sum of thirty pounds, which she accepted with gratitude and considered a small fortune.

He wrote to Mr. Samuel Whyte on the 23rd of December, 1764, that his removal to France was partly owing to the advice of his friends, that he hoped to find leisure there to finish the works which he had planned, that his health was so impaired as

to necessitate a change of climate, that he had found Blois to be the cheap place for which he longed, being able to live upon £100 a year there better than he could on £500 in London and that, as he could now "bid defiance to his merciless creditors," he hoped to make such terms with them as would render his circumstances easy for the rest of his life. He added that his wife had finished a comedy which he thought excellent, it being "spick and span new throughout," and that she was engaged in continuing the *Memoirs of Sidney Bidulph*.¹ The real purpose of Mr. Sheridan's sojourn in France was ludicrously misunderstood by John Horne, afterwards known as Horne Tooke, who wrote from Montpellier on the 3rd of January, 1760, to Wilkes and said:—"Sheridan is at Blois by order of His Majesty, and with a pension, inventing a method to give the proper pronunciation of the English language to strangers by means of sounds borrowed from their own; and he begins with the French."

Mrs. Sheridan sent the manuscript of her new play

¹ Miss Sheridan bought a small lamb from the butcher at Blois and made a pet of it. Its name was Robin. In the course of two years Robin grew to be a sheep and mischievous in his ways, and he became so troublesome that he was banished to a distance without the fact being announced to his young mistress. At midnight a piteous bleating was heard outside the door of the cottage. When opened, it was seen that Robin had found his way back. The family resolved to give him another trial. A few days afterwards, however, he destroyed some of the manuscript of Mr. Sheridan's Dictionary, and then he mysteriously disappeared. The young people suspected that he was returned to the butcher from whom he had been rescued and, for several weeks, not one of them would touch mutton lest it should be a part of poor Robin.

to her friend Mrs. Victor, who submitted it to Garrick. He declined to put it on the stage because:—"Imprimis, the play is without fable; secondly, all the scenes are detached; thirdly, there is nothing to interest the audience; and lastly, it has no humour."¹

These objections are sweeping and appear to be conclusive; but Mrs. Sheridan denied that they were just and indisputable. She little knew that it is as futile to argue with the manager of a theatre, as with the master of a hundred legions. Garrick was, perhaps, utterly mistaken; his adverse comments may have been as unfair and absurd as she supposed, yet it was easier for her to maintain that she had written a good comedy than to convert him to her view. The comedy has never been acted. Three acts only out of the five have been preserved. Mrs. Sheridan contended that the main purpose of the play "is comprised in the two or three last lines." and that the fate of the hero and heroine "is not decided till the very last scene."²

Either the fragment of *A Journey to Bath*, which has been preserved, or the original of

¹ "Garrick Correspondence," vol. i., pp. 17, 18. Mrs. Sheridan's letter is misplaced and misdated. The year 1743 is a misprint for 1763.

² Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, having seen a fragment of the comedy, writes that, as a whole, it "is a rather jejune, thin production, all talk and with but little action or character." He styles it "A Trip to Bath," the actual title being *A Journey to Bath*. He is right in saying there is a good deal of talk in it; he might have added, with equal truth, that the same remark applies to every comedy which has yet been composed.—"The Lives of the Sheridans," vol. i., p. 61.

which it is a copy was read by Sheridan and, being a dutiful son, he naturally thought that he might profit by his mother's unappreciated performance. He was indebted to her for the conception of Mrs. Malaprop. A similar personage, named Mrs. Tryfort, who is very stout, very indolent, and ignorant to the core, appears in *A Journey to Bath*. She is stated to have been fond of hard words which, "without *miscalling*, she always takes care to *misapply*." She observes that Lord Hewkly is "a progeny of learning, a terrestrial man," and remarks to Edward Bull,—“You are a little too pert, let me tell you, and so much taciturnity doesn't become a young man.” She tells Lord Hewkly,—“Your Lordship will excuse me for leaving you so deliberately.” Again, when referring to him, she says, “And he is so ingenious and full of his artifices;” also, “Hear him describe contagious countries! He is a perfect mine of geography.” She informs her daughter:—“I declare you are so inarticulate in your notions that I believe you are a changeling.” Mrs. Malaprop did not wish her daughter “to be a progeny of learning,” while Mrs. Tryfort says of Lord Hewkly:—“In everything he's a perfect progeny.” Speaking of her daughter Mrs. Tryfort indignantly asks, “Do you think Miss Tryfort doesn't understand punctuality better than to go into corners with young men?” She also calls her daughter “A silly chit that might be a countess if she had the grace to deserve it.” Her daughter replies, “I don't desire it;” and her mother retorts, “That's for you, Miss, a foolish metamorphosis!”

Mrs. Malaprop is not, however, Mrs. Tryfort under a different name.

Sheridan's exquisite taste and unrivalled skill in depicting character enabled him to make Mrs. Malaprop far less vulgar and far more amusing than his mother's Mrs. Tryfort. Yet the merit of her comedy is not small, and the stage lost something by Garrick's refusing to put upon it *A Journey to Bath*. Some of the other personages are cleverly drawn. They talk well and to the point. The following remarks of Sir Jonathan Bull, a City knight, are pregnant and excellent:—"When a plain man marries a Lady of Quality, he is master of nothing that belongs to him; it is my Lady such-a-one's house; my Lady such-a-one's children; and egad, he is no one but my Lady such-a-one's husband himself." Other personages speak out of character. Sir Jonathan Bull's son, Edward, addresses Lady Filmot, a fine and affected lady, in these terms:—"I must be very dull *indeed*, ma'am, if your ladyship didn't inspire me; you are the Iphegenia in the fable;" to which she replies—"Oh! that thou didst but resemble Cimon in the *real* as well as the assumed passion."

Mrs. Sheridan began to write a tragedy while staying at Blois, but she did not live to finish it. Another work, composed there, was published and dramatized after her death. This was *The History of Nourjahad*, in which sound philosophy is inculcated under the guise of an Oriental fable. Nourjahad is a young man who longs for inexhaustible riches and endless days; he obtains

his wish and his last state is worse and more pitiable than the first.

The Sheridans were happier at Blois than they had been for years. They formed some pleasant and useful friendships. There was a prospect, moreover, of an advantageous settlement of the father's affairs being effected in Ireland and he arranged to proceed thither, leaving his wife and children in France. A few days before the one appointed for his departure, his wife was seized with a fainting fit. She was put to bed, where she remained for a fortnight, and died on the 26th of September, 1766, at the age of forty-two.

The widowed Mr. Sheridan wrote to Mr. Samuel Whyte after the funeral :—" I have lost, what the world cannot repair, a bosom friend, another self. My children have lost—oh ! their loss is neither to be expressed, nor repaired. But the will of God be done."

Mrs. Thomas Sheridan is noteworthy among many bearing her name who have been endowed, like her, with some of Nature's choicest gifts. She had personal charms as well as intellectual graces. The praise which Dr. Johnson accorded to her has been quoted ; that of Dr. Parr may now be added :—" I knew her from her general character, from her excellent publications, and from one or two interviews which I had with her at the house of the very learned Dr. Sumner of Harrow. In clearness of intellect, delicacy of taste, and purity of heart she was one of the first women whom I ever knew."

It was her misfortune to be slightly lame in conse-

quence of an accident in childhood. Though endowed with many attractions and with intellectual powers which are as rare as they are enviable, yet that exquisite beauty of feature did not fall to her lot which has distinguished many of her female descendants. She had, however, a bust and arms of incomparable loveliness which painters asked permission to represent on canvas. Her shortcomings were few, uncommon and pardonable. Her husband found no other fault than that she dressed too plainly. She was as little covetous of admiration as she was averse to display. Had she sought for it, she might not have received the nicely turned compliment that a stranger paid in the public coach which ran between London and Windsor. In common with many other ladies of her day from the Queen downwards, among whom Cowper's attached friend Mrs. Unwin may be named, she was addicted to taking snuff. Having drawn off her glove to indulge in a pinch, her fellow-traveller remarked :—"There are few ladies, Madam, who would have concealed such a hand and an arm so long."

Mrs. Sheridan made no more parade of her abilities than she did of her beauties. The *Memoirs of Sidney Bidulph* appeared without the author's name on the title-page, and her writings did not give her the position in society which inferior authors have obtained from inferior works. These writings are among the best in the lighter literature of the Eighteenth century, yet her name and her works are less familiar to the reading public now

than those of Frances Burney and Jane Austen. After *Sidney Bidulph* had entranced the Town, Garrick gladly accepted a comedy from the pen of its accomplished author. While the *Evelina* of young Frances Burney was the rage, Richard Brinsley Sheridan requested her to write a comedy ; she gladly assented, and she produced at intervals *The Wittings*, a comedy which proved to be entirely unsuited for the stage ; a second comedy, *Love and Fashion*, which was accepted at Covent Garden and withdrawn at her father's urgent request, and a tragedy, *Edwy and Elgitha*, which was played at Drury Lane for one night only. Her *Diary* is better known now than her other productions. Mrs. Sheridan's reputation as a writer of successful novels and plays has been overshadowed by the universal and splendid fame of her son.

Mrs. Sheridan and Jane Austen differ from each other in many respects. The powers of Mrs. Sheridan were more comprehensive ; those of Jane Austen were greater within their range. Both died at the same age and both might have further enriched our literature if their lives had been prolonged. The novels of Jane Austen will continue to interest and to excite unbounded admiration so long as the liking shall survive for delicacy of feeling and finish in composition, and consummate skill in the delineation of character. A like immortality cannot be predicted for the writings of Mrs. Thomas Sheridan. Yet her fate is as enviable as Jane Austen's. Her name will be honoured while that of the first Richard Brinsley is remembered.

He owed more than life to her. The exquisite play of fancy, the genuine humour, the iridescence of faculties which were devoid of spot or blemish, the refined and uniform good taste, the innumerable touches of Nature, perfected by the highest art, that adorn and illumine his matchless plays and many of his speeches, are inheritances from the mother who bore him. Her death was an incalculable and irreparable deprivation. He lost her at an age when her care and counsel would have proved of immeasurable value. By dying prematurely she never enjoyed, what such a mother would have accounted a boon infinitely more desirable than length of days or any personal triumph, the assurance of having dowered and delighted the world with a wonderful son to whom had been transmitted all the fine and praiseworthy traits of her own noble and beautiful mind.

II.

LIFE'S SPRINGTIME.

SHERIDAN was born at 12 Dorset Street in the City of Dublin on the 30th of October, 1751.¹ He was

¹ According to the *Biographia Dramatica* for 1812, Sheridan was born "at Quilca, near Dublin," about 1752. Quilca is as near to Dublin as Rugby is to London.

In the "Memoirs," by Watkins, published in 1816, it is said that "the second son of Mr. Thomas Sheridan and Mrs. Frances Sheridan was born at the latter end of October, 1751, in Dorset Street, Dublin, and baptized on the 4th of November, in the parish church of St. Mary, by the names of Richard Brinsley."

In the "Memoirs," by Moore, the first chapter begins: "Richard Brinsley Sheridan was born in the month of September, 1751, at No. 12, Dorset Street, Dublin, and baptized in St. Mary's Church, as appears by the register of the parish, on the 4th of the following month." A footnote adds: "He was christened also by the name of Butler, after the Earl of Lanesborough."

Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, in his "Lives of the Sheridans," which appeared in 1886, prints this "extract" from the register of St. Mary's: "Richard Brinsley, son of Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan, baptized November 4th, 1751."

Both Moore and Mr. Fitzgerald must have seen the register with eyes differing from mine. In the part of it set apart for baptisms in 1751, this record appears on 4th November: "Thos. Brinsley, son of Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan," "Thos." being written in error.

baptized in the parish church of St. Mary, on the 4th of November, his godfather being Viscount Lanesborough who called him Brinsley, after his own father, in addition to Richard which was the name chosen by the boy's parents in honour of an uncle, Richard Chamberlaine, who was the second brother of Mrs. Thomas Sheridan. His mother had given birth to two boys before he saw the light. Thomas, the first-born, died in 1750, at the age of three, shortly before the appearance of a brother who was named Charles Francis. Two daughters completed the family; the elder, Alicia, entering the world in Dublin, 1754; the younger, Elizabeth Hume Crawford, doing so in London five years later.

The addition made in 1751 to the household in Dorset Street was not unwelcome, as there was abundant provision for new mouths, Mr. Sheridan being then prosperous and his prospects golden. Neither he nor his wife may have speculated whether the newcomer would make his mark in the world. A father thinks well of an infant if it refrain from crying incessantly, and a mother is delighted if it prove to be healthy, while both have reason to be satisfied so long as its natural task of taking adequate nourishment and sleep continues to be performed with unbroken regularity.

Fathers and mothers were often solicitous in former days about the influence that might be exerted by the stars which reigned at the nativity of their offspring. I regret that the custom has long been abandoned of casting a child's horoscope, because

it is most interesting to contrast an astrologer's guesses with ascertained facts. Besides, a man who has nothing to hope for in this world and has a craven fear of another may follow Dr. Faustus in throwing the blame of his bad conduct upon, "The stars that reigned at my nativity." All attempts to pierce futurity are fraught with charm. The professional prophet excites curiosity, whether he be the Medicine Man in an Indian village, the illiterate Gipsy who tells fortunes, or the impecunious tipster who professes to name beforehand the winner of a great race. No prophecy can fail of fulfilment when the conditions are suitable. The cleverest and most successful one of modern times was that attributed to Cazotte. It came true to the letter, in all its thrilling and horrible details, owing to La Harpe having wisely penned it after the event.¹

I regret still more that, while the belief in Fairies has found its last refuge in the nursery, the astute successors of astrologers often command a respectful hearing in the drawing-room, to which the belief in Palmistry has spread from the kitchen. None but innocent and inquiring children of tender years now place implicit trust in legends which the adults of bygone days reverently classed among gospel truths. The present generation takes pride in the conquests of steam and electricity, yet no master of modern science has rivalled the marvels with which unauthenticated tradition credits the denizens of

¹ The best account of La Harpe's 'Prophecy of Cazotte,' with valuable comments, is to be found at pp. 139-143 of the fifth volume of Sainte-Beuve's *Causeries du Lundi*.

Fairyland. It is true that great strides have been made in acquiring knowledge quite as useless as much which has been discarded as fable. The fairy tales which delighted the uneducated in the ages of faith have been succeeded by telegrams, concocted by news agencies, for the mystification of the credulous in this wondrous age of enlightenment. A current fiction does not begin with the ancient formula of "once upon a time"; but with such words as, "it is understood," "it is rumoured," "there is reason to believe," or, "it is stated on the best authority," and when an absolute untruth is circulated by sensation-mongers, they considerably label it as being, "subject to confirmation."

The earth grew poorer in poetry when the wonder-working Fairies vanished from the green-sward and the dales. Their achievements are now emulated by newspaper editors who devote themselves to the duty of providing instruction for a public which is assumed to be fond of reading and yearning for self-improvement. In the earlier, less prosaic and more artless days when Sheridan was in swaddling-clothes, a belief in Fairies and their powers was still in the ascendant, and nowhere was it cherished with greater ardour and pertinacity than throughout the sweet and unsophisticated Emerald Isle. These "good people," as the Fairies were fondly termed in Ireland, must have been aware of his entrance into the world and ready to perform their obvious duty. Premising this, I may suppose that, in accordance with immemorial usage, a good and a bad fairy appeared in

12 Dorset Street shortly after Sheridan's birth and that, as he was predestined to become a notable personage, the Queen of the Fairies deemed it befitting to play the chief part. I may also assume that she spoke first and to the following effect:—
“I endow this babe with all his grandfather's gaiety and good humour, with all his father's graces of oratory and with the manifold mental charms of his mother. I predict that he will live long and be highly esteemed, that he will marry the loveliest and most loveable among women, that his progeny will receive gifts from the fairies, that he will be the favourite of Princes and people of every degree, that all sensible persons who read or hear his words will take pleasure in them, and that his memory will endure and blossom so long as the young shamrock is green and roses smell sweetly.”

The wicked fairy listened with impatience and disgust to this speech, being conscious of her comparative impotence, yet being fully determined to thwart the pleasing prediction as far as lay within her power. Accordingly, she may have said in turn:—“I endow this babe, in addition, with all his grandfather's levity and thriftlessness and all his father's ill-luck, and I predict that he will find in a second marriage very few of the charms which made the first a foretaste of fairyland, and that unappreciative Irishmen will disparage him and diligently circulate tales which have been invented to bring dishonour upon his memory.” Having exhausted her power for working mischief, she shook her tiny fist at the sleeping infant and faded into the

darkness. Thereafter, the moon shone forth and brightened the bed-chamber. The Queen of the Fairies kissed the eyelids and mouth of the infant whom she had taken under her protection, and softly vanished amid the tinkling of silvery bells.

A pleasant influence certainly reigned over the small household in Dorset Street during Sheridan's infancy. Its head was then in high favour at Court and in society. His affairs had prospered beyond his hopes, and he was justified in expecting that wealth as well as applause and goodwill would be the speedy reward of his diligent efforts to entertain the public. In 1754, when the prospect seemed brightest, the crash came of which an account has been given,¹ and then he went to London in the hope of retrieving by renewed labour a part of the ruin which an angry and irrational mob had inflicted. Two years later he revisited Ireland, returning to England in 1758, and he took up his abode in London with his wife and elder boy, Charles Francis ; his younger son, Richard Brinsley, and his daughter, Alicia, being left behind in charge of a nurse who lovingly filled, for a time, the part of their mother. The two young children were sent to Mr. Samuel Whyte's school in Dublin, first as day-boarders and next as boarders, their nurse, in accordance with Mrs. Sheridan's desire, being accommodated in the school to look after them. Mr. Whyte was afterwards the schoolmaster of Moore.

A story has been circumstantially told and frequently repeated of what occurred when Sheridan

¹ See p. 24.

went to school for the first time. It is the precursor of many which are current, and it resembles in extravagance and falsity a large number of statements concerning him which the indolent and credulous accept as true and the malicious enjoy because they are discreditable.¹

The false legend runs that Mrs. Sheridan took her two boys to a private school in Dublin kept by Mr. Samuel Whyte, her cousin, and said that she had brought them to him as a trial of his patience as well as to receive instruction, that till then she had been "their only instructor," and that she had never met with two such "impenetrable dunces."² Mrs. Sheridan was not the lawful cousin of Mr. Whyte, though he was her uncle's son, that uncle having omitted to marry Mr. Whyte's mother.

¹ On the 4th of January, 1817, shortly after the publication of Dr. Watkins's *Memoirs* of the public and private life of Sheridan, Mrs. J. Lefanu—Sheridan's elder sister—wrote to her niece: "That book of Dr. Watkins' which he chooses to denominate a life of your Uncle, is a farrago of nonsense and a tissue of falsehoods; certainly some malignant spirit prompted him to write the history of one he seems to detest. The Duchess lent the book to Tom and he lent it to me. I was so ill at the time that I was quite unable to do what I much wished to do, that is to write to the reviewers that there is no truth in the book and that the fellow, whoever he is, knows nothing of the family that he has slandered. I think he is taking an unpardonable liberty to give an account of a set of people without their permission."

² A writer in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for July, 1816, appears to have been the fabricator of this tale, which Dr. Watkins reproduced, without acknowledging its source. Moore copied from Watkins, though possessing, before his own work appeared, the "Memoirs of Frances Sheridan," in which the story is shown to be untrue.

She had not been the sole instructor of her sons. In a letter to Samuel Richardson, written on the 18th of December, 1757, she tells him that her husband's time is fully occupied with various matters, including "instructing his boys."¹ Mrs. Sheridan took her younger son and her daughter to school; this fact alone suffices to show the incorrectness of the story, while if she had made any remark, it might have been couched in the commonplace and comprehensible form that her little boy of seven and his sister of four were not very fond of their lessons.

The inventor of the story may have amused himself by retailing a piece of fiction; those who have reproduced it as fact have abetted in imposing upon the public, and it has been made the text for insipid moralizing of this kind: "It may be consoling to parents who are in the first crisis of impatience, at the sort of hopeless stupidity which some children exhibit, to know that the dawning of Sheridan's intellect was as dull and unpromising as his meridian day was bright."² The climax of absurdity is reached when it is gravely affirmed that the little boy of seven, who was said to have been an impenetrable dunce, was in the habit of writing epigrams on his master and repeating them in after years!³ In one of these epigrams his brother

¹ "Richardson's Correspondence," vol. iv., p. 165.

² Moore's "Memoirs" of Sheridan, vol. i., p. 4. Moore embellished, and added to the falsity of the story by writing that "Sheridan, by common consent both of parent and preceptor, was pronounced to be an impenetrable dunce."

³ "Sheridan and his Times," by an "Octogenarian," vol. i., p. 19. This book contains a few facts of interest and much silly

Charles Francis, who was never under Mr. Whyte's tuition, or at any school, is represented as being birched by Mr. Whyte to sharpen his wits.

Eighteen months after the departure of their parents, Sheridan and his sister were taken to England, and in 1762 he was sent to Harrow, where Dr. Sumner was then headmaster and Dr. Parr one of the under masters. Mr. Thomas Sheridan had made Dr. Sumner's personal acquaintance some time before. The lad remained at Harrow till he was in his eighteenth year. He was reputed to be exceedingly clever, and he speedily gained the confidence and respect of his teachers and schoolfellows, while it is debateable whether he attained high rank in scholarship. It is indisputable, however, that he was a prime mover in the juvenile freaks which most boys of his age delight in, and he was noted for always having a large store of apples which had been gathered from neighbouring orchards by comrades who acknowledged and obeyed him as their leader. Though often suspected, he was never convicted of taking a personal part in breaking any rule or disobeying any command. His teachers perceived his capacity, and they desired that he should do himself justice and become a credit to the school. After entering it, he was often humiliated by references, fraught with the cruelty in which boys excel, to the fact that he

fiction. The name of the author is not given in Halkett and Laing's *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Literature*. Appeals have vainly been made to the readers of *Notes and Queries* for the author's name. I now state in print for the first time that his name was *William Earle*.

was the son of a player. He conquered the prejudices of his schoolfellows, and, before parting from them, he had attained the intoxicating position of general favourite. He left a pleasant memory behind him. The Duke of Grafton told Moore in 1818 that "he had succeeded Sheridan, within a few years, at Harrow, and found his memory preserved very affectionately there, his poems repeated, and a room called after his name."¹ Byron was another Harrovian who became Sheridan's attached friend and who, like him, reflected glory on the school. Sheridan sat in the House of Commons with Peel and Palmerston, two other Harrovians whose names, like his own, are deservedly honoured in Parliament as well as at Harrow.

In later life Dr. Parr knew Sheridan intimately and was the instructor of his elder son. Those were days when men who agreed in politics could see neither faults in each other nor excellencies in those who belonged to the opposite party; thus Parr's admiration for Sheridan was unbounded. Writing about him two years after Sheridan's death, Dr. Parr said:—"In the absence of the Upper Master, Dr. Sumner, it once fell in my way to instruct the two upper forms, and upon calling up Dick Sheridan I found him not only slovenly in construing, but unusually defective in his Greek grammar. Knowing him to be a clever fellow, I did not fail to probe and to tease him. I stated his case with great good humour to the Upper Master, who was one of the best-tempered men in the world,

¹ Moore's "Diary," vol. ii., p. 149.

and it was agreed between us, that Richard should be called up oftener and worked more severely. The varlet was not suffered to stand up in his place; but was summoned to take his station near the master's table, where the voice of no prompter could reach him; and, in this defenceless condition he was so harassed, that he at last gathered up some grammatical rules, and prepared himself for his lessons. While this tormenting process was inflicted upon him I now and then upbraided him. But you will take notice that he did not incur any corporal punishment for his idleness; his industry was just sufficient to protect him from disgrace. All the while, Sumner and I saw in him vestiges of a superior intellect. His eye, his countenance, his general manner, were striking. His answers to any common questions were prompt and acute. We knew the esteem and even admiration which, somehow or other, all his school-fellows felt for him. He was mischievous enough, but his pranks were accompanied by a sort of vivacity and cheerfulness which delighted Sumner and myself."

In another letter, Dr. Parr gave additional particulars:—"Sumner and myself discovered talents, which neither of us could bring into action while Sheridan was a school-boy. He gave us few opportunities of praise in the course of his school-business, and yet he was well aware that we thought highly of him, and anxiously wished more to be done by him than he was disposed to do. . . . In the later periods of his life Richard did not cast behind him classical reading. He spoke copiously and powerfully about Cicero. He had read, and he had under-

stood, the four orations of Demosthenes read and taught in our public schools. He was at home in Virgil and in Horace. I cannot speak positively about Homer,—but I am very sure that he read the Iliad now and then, *not* as a professed scholar would do, critically, but with all the strong sympathies of a poet reading a poet. . . .

“Let me assure you that Richard, when a boy, was by no means vicious. The sources of his infirmities were a scanty and precarious allowance from the father ; the want of a regular plan for some profession ; and, above all, the act of throwing him upon the town when he ought to have been pursuing his studies at the University. He would have done little among mathematicians at Cambridge ; he would have been a rake, or an idler, or a trifler at Dublin ; but I am inclined to think that at Oxford he would have become an excellent scholar.”

Dr. Parr was one of the last of the great classical pedants in whose eyes an exact knowledge of the Greek and Latin grammar and a minute acquaintance with the Greek and Latin classics constituted a title to universal respect and everlasting fame. If he praised Sheridan for his knowledge of the ancient language, he did so with perfect sincerity, and not even Sheridan's powers as a mystificator could have had the slightest influence upon Dr. Parr. By his second marriage Sheridan had a son, Charles Brinsley, who possessed no ordinary knowledge of Greek and Latin, and the songs which he translated from the Roumaic remain as a testimony to his talent. He had read what Moore wrote in dis-

paragement both of his father's acquired learning and the praise of Dr. Parr, and he remarked that his father "was in the habit of reading in after life the Latin classics. I remember seeing Lucan's *Pharsalia* on his bed of a morning."¹

Those who are familiar with the speeches in the House of Commons which Sheridan delivered at a time when a parliamentary orator was expected to be a scholar as well as a gentleman, and to have at his command appropriate passages from the classics, do not require to be told how effectively Sheridan often introduced a classical quotation into a speech which, if it did not influence a division, gave great gratification to such an opponent as William Pitt and to such a political and personal friend as Charles James Fox, both of whom prized classical scholarship nearly as highly as political fame.²

Mr. Sheridan was at Blois while his son, Richard Brinsley, was at Harrow, and he had confided him to the kindly attention of his uncle, Richard Chamberlaine. As for himself, he was then struggling under a load of debt, and incapable of supplying much money

¹ Moore not only sneers at Sheridan's classical learning (vol. i., p. 12), but he makes frequent and ostentatious parade of his own.

² Among the many fictions current about Sheridan, there is one to the effect that he once "hoaxed the House of Commons" by quoting nonsense lines which sounded like, and were supposed to be, Greek hexameters. Many contributors to *Notes and Queries* have displayed ingenuity in guessing how the lines ran. Somebody has been hoaxed, but Sheridan is blameless. On the 16th January, 1789, he pointed out that Lord Belgrave had misunderstood or misapplied some words which he quoted from Demosthenes. This was enlightening and not hoaxing the House.

to Richard Brinsley, for whom he entertained an unaccountable dislike. Richard Chamberlaine provided his forlorn nephew with the indispensable funds which his father was reluctant or unable to furnish. The earliest of the boy's letters which have been preserved are addressed to him. The first is dated the 2nd of March, 1765 :—" Dear Uncle, As it is not more than three weeks to the holydays, I should be greatly obliged to you, if you could get me some new cloaths as soon as possible, for those which I have at present are very bad and as I have no others ; I am almost ashamed to wear them on a sunday. I fancy I shall spend my holy-days again at Harrow, for I have not seen nor heard from Mr. Akenhead since August.¹ Though I had rather stay at Harrow than go to Richmond. Mr. Somner asked me the other day if I had heard lately from my Brother and says he has not heard from them this long time : if you have had a letter lately I should be obliged to you would let me know how they are, and when they come to England for I long to see them. I should be greatly obliged to you if you would let me have some cloaths as soon as possible, for when these want mending I have no others to wear. Mr. and Mrs. Somner are very

¹ " Mr. Aikenhead, a splendid West Indian, who had a villa at Richmond, was, with his lady, among those who, in the absence of his parents, paid the greatest attention to Richard Brinsley. This Mr. Aikenhead was an old friend of Mr. Sheridan's, and all the vacations of his son were spent either at the town or country residence of that gentleman, who is well known as an amateur of fashion in the literary and theatrical history of the day " ("Memoirs of Mrs. Frances Sheridan," p. 256).

Dear Uncle

It is now almost a week since Mr

Somner told me the melancholy news of my poor mother's death; & as Mr Somner has not heard what time my Father will be home, he desires ^{to you} me to write about mourning.

I have wrote To Koley, who, with ^{your} orders, will make me a suit of Black. I should be obliged to you if you would let me know what time you expect my Father. you will excuse the shortness of my letter, as the subject

P.S. is disagreeable; from your affectionate I must also have a new hat with a couple of Nephew
black stockings & buckles. I should be
glad of them on Saturday. R B Sheridan.

LETTER FROM SHERIDAN WHILE AT HARROW.

Vol. i. To face p. 72.

well. I am Dear Uncle your affectionate nephew,
R. B. Sheridan."

The second was written by him a year later :—
"Dear Uncle, It is now almost a week since Mr. Somner told me the mellancholy knews of my poor mother's death : and as Mr. Somner has not heard what time my Father will be home, he desires me to write to you about mourning. I have wrote to Riley, who, with your orders, will make me a suit of Black. I should be obliged to you if you would let me know what time you expect my Father. You will excuse the shortness of my letter, as the subject is disagreeable. from your affectionate nephew
R. B. Sheridan.

"P.S. I must also have a new hat with a crape and black stokins and buckles. I should be glad of them on saturday."

Two years elapsed after Mrs. Sheridan's death at Blois before her children were re-united. When her daughter Alicia returned to England, she rejoiced to rejoin the brother whom she passionately loved. Shortly after that brother's death she wrote at length to his widow in reply to a request for particulars about his early days, the letter being dated "Dublin, November 9th, 1816 :—I wish I could be of the use you suppose in giving a satisfactory account of the early days of my beloved brother. Of his childhood I have a very faint recollection ; neither he nor I were very happy, but we were fondly attached to each other. We had no one else to love. My father's affections were fixed on his eldest son and on my sister. Had my mother lived our fate would have been different, for

she had a spirit of justice that would have prevented her from showing favour towards any of her children but as they might deserve it. My brother at the age of ten years was sent to Harrow School under the care of Dr. Sumner who was a particular friend of my father's. For three years we never saw him except during the Christmas and summer vacation, periods that I looked forward to as the only happy hours my childhood was to know. We then were separated for four years which were spent, by my eldest brother, my sister and myself, in France.

"My mother's health and some arrangement in my father's affairs were the motives for retiring to Blois upon the Loire where at the end of two years we lost the best and most judicious of mothers. She often regretted that my brother Richard was not with us, but she and my father thought it best not to take him from the course of studies he had entered upon and in which he was making a rapid progress. My father whose avocations called him to Ireland left my sister and me under the care of my brother Charles [Francis] at St. Quentin a small town in Picardy. We were boarded with a French elderly maiden lady, the daughter of a Protestant clergyman, a very sensible and good woman. And highly to the credit of my father's propriety of mind be it told that he might have had us educated (I speak of my sister and myself) at the Royal Convent at Brussels for half what it cost him where he judged our religious principles would be unassailed and our moral habits strengthened.

"At the end of two years we returned to England

when I may say I became acquainted with my brother, for faint and imperfect were my recollections of him as might be expected from my age. I saw him, and my childish attachment revived with double force. He was handsome, not merely in the eyes of a partial sister but generally allowed to be so. His cheeks had the glow of health, his eyes, the finest in the world, the brilliancy of genius as soft and tender as an affectionate heart could render them, the same playful fancy the same sterling and innoxious wit that was shown afterwards in his writings, cheered and delighted the family circle. I admired, I almost adored him, I would most willingly have sacrificed my life for him, as I in some measure proved to him at Bath where we resided for some time and where events that you must have heard of engaged him in a duel. My father's displeasure threatened to involve me in the denunciations against him for committing what he considered as a crime, yet I risked everything and eventually was made happy by obtaining forgiveness for my brother.

"His subsequent marriage produced fresh disturbances, a reconciliation again took place between him and my father but there never after subsisted that cordial affection that would, I am sure, have taken place but for the interference of busy, meddling, ill-intentioned people. Yet it was that son and not the object of his partial fondness that closed his eyes. He then took my sister home and was by her own acknowledgment invariably kind to her. Under his roof she married and he then settled

upon her what for many years was punctually [paid] and withheld only when ruin encompassed him."

In 1769, after the return of his daughters from France, Mr. Sheridan took a house in Frith Street, Soho, and there gathered all his children around him. He saw much company, Topham Beauclerc, Wedderburn, Foote and Boswell being among his visitors. His daughter Elizabeth used to recall in after years how much she was impressed, as a little girl, with a thin eager-looking young man dressed in black who talked much about General Paoli. This man was Boswell, to whom her father once said: "I suppose you are in mourning for Corsica," and he answered in the affirmative.¹

It is doubtful what Mr. Sheridan desired that his sons should do when they were men. He was averse to their going on the stage; he would scarcely expect, judging from his own experience, that they could live by writing books. The probability is that he contemplated employing them to further his self-imposed task of teaching the nation how to excel in oratory, and thereby take its place in the foremost files of civilization. They would serve, he may have thought, to exhibit the result of his training, and he may have expected that other young men would be induced, by their example and proficiency, to take lessons from their father. Charles Francis, the elder and favourite son, had been exhibited as a specimen of what education, according to his father's method of imparting elocution, could contribute to give

¹ "Memoirs" of Mrs. Frances Sheridan, by Alicia Lefanu, p. 337.

grace and attraction to speech and person. Richard Brinsley's talents were not turned to the same account. It is believed that he refused to serve his father as a model orator, and this may have helped to embitter his father against him.

During the residence of the two boys in London their education was not neglected. Mr. Lewis Ker, who had been a physician in Ireland, and whose health was so impaired that he was obliged to abandon the practice of his profession, gave them lessons in classics and mathematics. They were instructed in fencing and riding by Angelo, a famous and accomplished teacher. The Angelo and Sheridan families were on a most friendly footing, having been intimately acquainted for many years. In the days of Mr. Sheridan's greatest prosperity, Angelo's son, Henry, had spent many happy hours as a visitor to his house in Dublin. A letter to him has been printed which Mr. Sheridan wrote in 1774 and in which he recommends the study of Richardson's works on the ground that "no author is better qualified both to improve the mind and regulate the heart." During the residence of the Sheridan family in London, after returning from France, Sheridan was a welcome guest at the Angelos' house, and Mr. Henry Angelo records that "his engaging manners and lively wit rendered him a delightful companion, and a general favourite with all whom he met at our family table." It was in return for Mr. Sheridan's kindness to his son Henry that Angelo gave Richard Brinsley careful instruction in the use of the small sword, and his proficiency

in handling this weapon stood him in good stead when he had to fight a duel.¹

Mr. Sheridan kept a tight hand over his children. He was a strict disciplinarian, and he managed his household as sternly as he did a theatre. He exacted unquestioning obedience from those dependent upon him, while he took great offence if his superiors required submission from him. He "poured lava," as he said, upon those who had offended him. He was very methodical and precise in all his ways. He had morning prayers regularly, and on Sunday evenings he either commented on the sermon of the day or expounded a passage in the Bible. He was fond of Dr. Johnson's *Ramblers*, and his daughters were often wearied and disheartened with the task of reading them aloud, because he was exacting with regard to enunciation and cadence, and careful in correcting what he deemed their faults of speech.

The impression made on Richard Brinsley by life in his father's household was more agreeable than might be supposed, and it was fondly cherished during many years. In later days he called to see his father, but did not find him at home. His sister received him in the dining-room, where the cloth was laid, and he exclaimed: "Ah! I could fancy myself back among old times, seated with Charles and my sisters at this table, and my father looking round us, and giving his favourite toast: 'Healths, hearts and homes.'"²

¹ "Reminiscences of Henry Angelo," vol. i., p. 74; vol. ii., p. 85.

² "Memoirs of Mrs. Frances Sheridan," p. 350.

III.

LIFE AT BATH.

AT the end of 1770, Mr. Sheridan removed with his family from London to Bath, a city in which his lectures had been greatly liked and where he hoped to rise still higher in popular favour and to reap a far richer harvest. The attractions of Bath were then unique. Life there was most delightful to seekers after amusement, while those who aspired after fame and wealth enjoyed many advantages and found many excellent opportunities.

It is difficult to realize the condition of Bath during the Eighteenth century. No other city in England could then vie with it. It is still famous and fashionable ; its special beauties have neither faded nor failed ; its healing springs have lost none of their magical virtues, yet its meretricious charms have vanished, and their departure cannot be noted without a slight feeling of regret. Whatever once delighted idlers in London could be found on a smaller scale and in an even more pleasant form in Bath, and those who were ailing in the larger city might hope to become well in the smaller. A renowned health resort is a paradise for hypo-

chondriacs, and hypochondriacs are generally wealthy persons who readily part with their money to regain the health which they fancy has been lost. They crowded to Bath, and, to use Horace Walpole's familiar phrase, they "went there well and returned home cured."¹

When Bath was in its prime as a city of pleasure, the line of demarcation between classes was less tightly drawn and clearly defined than in London, and a plausible adventurer had a better chance of playing his game among credulous and foolish men and women in the watering-place than in the Capital. A handsome person and polished manners, a fluent tongue and an insinuating address, fine clothes and fine sentiments, constituted passports to admission into the best society of Bath for many years before Richard Brinsley Sheridan first saw it and for many more after he had ceased to be a resident. During his sojourn it was the favourite haunt of fortune-hunters and of rascals who lived by their wits and their wickedness. Monte Carlo now represents in many particulars what Bath was in the years that are gone.

The liveliest, the most attractive, and probably the most correct pictures of society in old Bath are to be found in old novels. Smollett, who practised

¹ The conception of Bath at the present day in the mind of a Dorsetshire labourer is cleverly represented by Mr. Thomas Hardy in *Far from the Madding Crowd*: "'The people of Bath,' continued Cain, 'never need to light their fires except as a luxury, for the water springs up out of the earth ready boiled for use. They drink nothing else there, and seem to enjoy it, to see how they swaller it down.'" Edition 1893, p. 223.

as a physician there, repeatedly introduces the place into his works ; Jane Austen has given a pleasanter account of it as seen at a later time ; Walter Scott has recorded the impression which it made upon him when a little boy.

In *Roderick Random* it is stated how the hero escorted Miss Snapper to the Long-room ; how Nash, the Master of the Ceremonies, displayed his bad breeding by asking the name of Tobit's dog, and was rightly and unexpectedly rebuffed by the answer, "his name was Nash and an impudent dog he was." In *Peregrine Pickle* it is narrated how Godfrey Gauntlett checkmated the sharpers at billiards and cards, and hoaxed the doctors.

The following passages in *Humphrey Clinker* are even more instructive, because they exhibit the views of a censorious elderly man on the one hand, and of a gushing young lady on the other. Matthew Bramble says in a letter to Dr. Lewis :—"Every upstart of a fortune, harnessed in the trappings of the mode, presents himself at Bath, as in the very focus of observation : Clerks and factors from the East Indies, loaded with the spoil of plundered provinces ; planters, negro-drivers and hucksters from our American plantations, enriched they know not how ; agents, commissaries and contractors who have fattened, in two successive wars, on the blood of the nation ; usurers, brokers and jobbers of every kind ; men of low birth and no breeding, have found themselves suddenly translated into a state of affluence, unknown to former ages ; and no wonder that their brains should be intoxicated with pride,

vanity and presumption. Knowing no other criterions of greatness but the ostentation of wealth, they discharge their affluence, without taste or conduct, through every channel of the most absurd extravagance; and all of them hurry to Bath, because here, without any farther qualification, they can mingle with the princes and nobles of the land. Even the wives and daughters of low tradesmen who, like shovel-nosed sharks, prey upon the blubber of those uncouth whales of fortune, are infected with the same rage of displaying their importance; and the slightest indisposition serves them for a pretext to insist upon being conveyed to Bath, where they may hobble country-dances and cotillions among lordlings, squires, counsellors and clergy."

The picture drawn by Mr. Bramble's niece, Miss Lydia Melford, in a letter to Miss Willis at Gloucester, illustrates the difference caused by the point of view. Her description conveys a vivid account of the manners, conduct and characters which made the place appear a heaven to impressionable and uncritical young ladies:—"Bath is to me a new world—all is gaiety, good-humour and diversion. The eye is continually entertained with the splendour of dress and equipage, and the ear with the sound of coaches, chaises, chairs and other carriages. *The merry bells ring round*, from morn till night. Then we are welcomed by the city waits in our own lodgings; we have music in the Pump-room every morning, cotillions every forenoon in the rooms, balls twice a week, and concerts every other night, besides private assemblies and parties without

number. As soon as we were settled in lodgings, we were visited by the Master of the Ceremonies, a pretty little gentleman, so sweet, so fine, so civil and polite, that in our country he might pass for a Prince of Wales. . . .

“At eight in the morning we go in *dishabille* to the Pump-room, which is crowded like a Welsh fair ; and there you see the highest quality and the lowest tradesfolks jostling each other without ceremony,—hail fellow ! well met ! The noise of the music playing in the gallery, the heat and flavour of such a crowd, and the hum and buzz of their conversation gave me the headache and vertigo the first day ; but, afterwards, all these things became familiar and even agreeable. Right under the Pump-room windows is the King’s bath ; a huge cistern, where you see the patients up to their necks in the water. The ladies wear jackets and petticoats of brown linen, with chip hats, in which they fix their handkerchiefs and wipe the sweat from their faces ; but, truly, whether it is owing to the steam that surrounds them, or the heat of the water or the nature of the dress, or to all these causes together, they look so flushed and so frightened, that I always turn my eyes another way. . . . Hard by the Pump-room is a coffee-house for the ladies ; but my aunt says young girls are not admitted, inasmuch as the conversation turns upon politics, scandal, philosophy and other subjects above our capacity ; but we are allowed to accompany them to the booksellers’ shops, which are charming places of resort, where we read novels, plays, pamphlets and newspapers for so small

a subscription as a crown a quarter ; and in these offices of intelligence (as my brother calls them) all the reports of the day, and all the private transactions of the bath, are first entered and discussed. From the booksellers' shop we make a tour through the milliners and toymen, and commonly stop at Mr. Gill's, the pastry-cook, to take a jelly, a tart, or a small basin of vermicelli. . . .

"After all, the great scenes of entertainment at Bath are the two public rooms, where the company meet alternately every evening. They are spacious, lofty, and when lighted up appear very striking. They are generally crowded with well-dressed people, who drink tea in separate parties, play at cards, walk or sit or chat together, just as they are disposed. Twice a week there is a ball, the expense of which is defrayed by a voluntary subscription among the gentlemen, and every subscriber has three tickets."¹

Smollett's references to Bath in his works of fiction are the fruit of personal observation and disappointment. Being an unsuccessful practitioner of medicine, he was inclined to revenge himself upon the place ; hence, the disparaging statements which he puts into the mouths of his fictitious personages should not be accepted as true to the letter. Frances Burney, whose position as a writer is as high as his, and Jane Austen, who ranks far above both of them, have written about Bath with full personal knowledge and in the most eulogistic terms.

Before passing from the jaundiced views of

¹ Smollett's Works in six volumes, vol. vi., pp. 36, 37, and 39-42.

Smollett to the roseate ones of these lady novelists, a few lines by Christopher Anstey will help the reader to reconstruct in imagination the Bath of the olden time :—

“ Of all the gay places the world can afford
By gentle and simple for pastime adored,
Fine balls and fine concerts, fine buildings and springs,
Fine walks and fine views, and a thousand fine things,
(Not to mention the sweet situation and air)
What place, my dear mother, with Bath can compare ?
Let Bristol for commerce and dirt be renowned,
At Salisbury, pen knives and scissors be ground ;
The towns of Devizes, of Bradford and Frome,
May boast that they better can manage the loom :
I believe that they may ;—but the world to refine,
In manners and dress, in politeness to shine,
Oh Bath ! let the art, let the glory be thine.”¹

In Frances Burney's *Diary* for the 7th of April, 1780, there is a record of her intense admiration for what she styles the beautiful city of Bath, adding, “ I could fill whole pages upon the general beauty of the place and country.” When she re-visited it several years later, she writes that “ its circumference is perhaps trebled ; but its buildings are so unfinished, so spread, so everywhere beginning and nowhere ending, that it looks rather like a space of ground lately fixed upon for erecting a town, than a town of so many years' duration. It is beautiful and wonderful throughout. The hills are built up and down, and the vales so stocked with trees and houses, that, in some places, from the ground-floor on one side of a street, you cross over

¹ “ The New Bath Guide,” quarto edition, p. 35.

to the attic of your opposite neighbour. . . . In brief, yet in truth, it looks a city of palaces, a town of hills, and a hill of towns."¹

Jane Austen visited Bath, with her invalid brother, Edward, in 1799. He drank the mineral water, he bathed in it and tried the curative effect of electricity, the result of the combined treatment being prolongation of his life for fifty-three years; he died at the age of eighty-two. Writing to her sister Cassandra on the 17th of May, 1799, Jane says that the list of arrivals is long, "so that we need not immediately dread absolute solitude; and there is a public breakfast in Sydney Gardens every morning, so that we shall not be wholly starved." A fortnight later she writes:—"There is to be a grand gala on Tuesday evening in Sydney Gardens, a concert, with illuminations and fireworks. To the latter, Elizabeth and I look forward with pleasure, and even the concert will have more than its usual charm for me, as the gardens are large enough for me to get pretty well beyond the reach of its sound."²

The Bath of the days in which Jane Austen resided there is represented in *Northanger Abbey* with the fidelity of a Dutch painter and a picturesqueness worthy of Sir Walter Scott. Her touch is far lighter than Smollett's and the impression left by her pictures is far more pleasing.

The Master of the Ceremonies in her story is a

¹ "Diary and Letters" of Madame d'Arblay, vol. i., p. 312; vol. ii., pp. 248, 249.

² "Letters" of Jane Austen, vol. i., pp. 210, 214.

very different man from him whose rudeness is recorded in *Roderick Random* and whose discomfiture at the hands of Miss Snapper is enjoyed by the reader. When Catherine Morland, the heroine of *Northanger Abbey*, and Mrs. King first entered the ball-room together they were both disappointed. Catherine found no partner for the dance and Mrs. King no person to converse with ; but on the second occasion Catherine was more fortunate, being then introduced to the Rev. Henry Tilney by the Master of the Ceremonies. Those were days in which clergymen danced or hunted without thinking any evil or being subjected to reproach. Catherine Morland and Henry Tilney became partners in the ball-room and afterwards for life. Other personages in the novel act as many did in the place where they sojourned. Mrs. Allen is true to Nature in her consuming desire to add to the number of her acquaintance and to enjoy all the amusements ; as are also John Thorpe, the blunt young man, with his intense liking for horses, and his lackadaisical sisters, with as keen a liking for beaux. All of these persons play their parts to perfection, and the whole constitutes a picture as lively as it is life-like, and finished in every detail.

Another view of Bath life was given by Hannah More, who frequently visited it, but she found less to please her and to applaud than Jane Austen. She was shocked, as she wrote to a friend on the 1st of January, 1792, at the spectacle of " Bath, happy Bath, being as gay as if there was no war, nor sin, nor misery in the world ! We run about

all the morning lamenting the calamities of the times, anticipating our ruin, reprobating the taxes, and regretting the general dissipation; and every night we are running into every excess, to a degree unknown in calmer times. Yet it is the fashion to affect to be religious, and to show it by inveighing against the wickedness of France! I really know many who believe they are pious on no other ground."¹

Hannah More's opinions were shared by Wilberforce, who, when at Bath a few years earlier, wrote in his journal:—"My head was much weakened during my illness. I mended exceedingly during my stay. Much out airing. Never visited, but saw a good deal of company at home. Too dissipated a place, except the waters are necessary. Habits of idleness almost inseparable from it, and one grows insensibly fond of them."²

There is scarcely a noteworthy name in English Parliamentary history, since the Revolution of 1688, which is not borne by a visitor to Bath for health or pleasure, or for health and pleasure combined. Conspicuous among the statesmen who frequented it were Pulteney and Chesterfield, Bolingbroke and Chatham, John Wilkes and Charles James Fox, William Pitt, and Edmund Burke. The list is a long one of great names in the world of letters who have been there, and none is more memorable than that of Sir Walter Scott. He spent a year at Bath when a little boy,

¹ "The Life and Correspondence" of Hannah More, vol. ii., p. 307.

² "Life" of Wilberforce, vol. i., p. 174.

and he notes in his *Autobiography*, "I went through all the discipline of the Pump-room, but I believe without the least advantage to my lameness." His remembrance was most vivid in after life of several incidents during his stay. His uncle, Captain Robert Scott, took him to the theatre, where he saw *As You Like It*, and caused a sensation by screaming out during the quarrel between Orlando and his brother in the first scene: "Aren't they brothers?" For him, as for grown-up men and women, Bath was enchanted ground. He records that "the beauties of the Parade (which of them I know not) with the river Avon winding around it, and the lowing of the cattle from the opposite hills, are warm in my recollection, and are only rivalled by the splendours of a toy-shop somewhere near the Orange Grove."¹

Any account of Bath after Sheridan's time would contain references to such great masters of modern fiction as Dickens and Thackeray. The story would include changes in society and manners, in persons and places, as striking as those which Frances Burney and Jane Austen beheld with wonder and described with inimitable cleverness. The ancient city has now many competitors both at home and abroad, yet it has no superior in its best characteristics. Patients flock to its springs with a faith justified by the experience of centuries and with the certainty of finding there every appliance which art can add to natural resources for restoring health. Pleasure seekers now wander elsewhere to empty their purses and shorten their lives. Life at Bath

¹ "Life" of Scott, vol. i., p. 22.

has become more serious ; nevertheless the roll of visitors at all seasons is far longer at present than when Bath had no other important competitor than the Hot Wells of Bristol. At that time news from Bath filled even more space in London newspapers than was devoted to news from the American Colonies or from the European Continent. The public Press of Bath had a reputation which was as well justified as that of the thermal springs. The *Bath Chronicle* has been in existence for nearly a hundred and forty years and the *Bath Journal* for upwards of a hundred and fifty, yet they are as vigorous and well-conducted as in the days when Sheridan was a contributor to one of them and his doings were carefully recorded by both.

Few among the visitors to Bath at any time in its history have had their names more romantically associated with it than Sheridan, and few of its natives have had a more interesting career than Elizabeth Ann Linley, who was born at 5, Pierrepont Street, on the 7th of September, 1754. The Linley family, consisting of three sons and four daughters, was the first with which the young Sheridans became intimately acquainted after removing from London to Bath. When present by invitation at a small musical party in Mr. Linley's house, Charles Sheridan and his brother were introduced to Miss Linley, who was then sixteen and whose voice was entrancing and whose beauty was marvellous. Her second sister Mary, was a sweet and an accomplished singer, and attractive in feature and figure, yet she was less admired and loveable than Elizabeth.

The personal and impartial testimony of John Wilkes to this effect is to be found in a letter to his daughter : " I have passed an evening with Mr. Brereton's family and the two Misses Linley. The elder I still think superior to all the handsome things I have heard of her. She does not seem in the least spoiled by the idle talk of our sex, and is the most modest, pleasing, and delicate flower I have seen for a long time : the younger a mere coquette, no sentiment."¹

Sheridan had the advantage of moving in Bath society and seeing much which was alike curious and amusing. One of the personages who must have impressed him was Lady Miller, whose name was well-known, who was the leader in a select circle, and who lived at Bath-Easton, which is a few miles distant from the city. Sheridan was very observant ; his mind was impressionable ; his memory was retentive, and he had a sharp eye and keen sense for whatever was eccentric and ludicrous. Hence he found ample material for immediate pleasure or future use at Lady Miller's gatherings, where celebrities of the day met together to amuse themselves by playing at being versifiers. Their performances, though harmless, were unmercifully ridiculed.

Lady Miller had risen in the world from a lowly and uncultured state, and her ambition was to shine and be acknowledged as a woman of high-breeding and refined taste. She had travelled through Italy, in days when to do so was a feat, and written a narrative of her experience. She flaunted her self-

¹ Almon's "Memoirs" of Wilkes, vol. iv., p. 97.

importance among those who had less familiarity with historic spots and persons on the continent of Europe. Horace Walpole has taken care that Lady Miller and her pretensions should be exaggerated and immortalized ; he thus wrote about her to Lady Aylesbury :—“ You must know, Madam, there is erected a new Parnassus, composed of three laurels, a myrtle tree, a weeping willow, and a view of the Avon, which has now been christened Helicon. Ten years ago there lived a Madam Riggs, an old rough humourist who passed for a wit ; her daughter, who passed for nothing, married to a Captain Miller, full of good-natured officiousness. These good folks were friends of Miss Rich, who carried me to dine with them at Bath-Easton, now Pindus. They caught a little of what was then called taste, built and planted, and begot children, till the whole caravan were forced to go abroad to retrieve. Alas ! Mrs. Miller is returned a beauty, a genius, a Sappho, a tenth Muse, as romantic as Mademoiselle Scuderi, and as sophisticated as Mrs. Vesey. The Captain’s fingers are loaded with cameos, his tongue runs over with *virtù*, and that both may contribute to the improvement of their country, they have introduced *bout-rimés* as a new discovery. They hold a Parnassus fair every Thursday, give out rhymes and themes, and all the flux of quality at Bath contend for the prizes. A Roman vase, dressed with pink ribbons and myrtles, receives the poetry, which is drawn out every festival ; six judges of these Olympic games retire and select the brightest compositions, which the respective successful acknow-

ledge, kneel to Mrs. Calliope Miller, kiss her fair hand, and are crowned with myrtle,—with, I don't know what. You may think this a fiction, or exaggeration. Be dumb! unbelievers! The collection is printed, published. Yes, on my faith, there are *bout-rimés* on a buttered muffin made by Her Grace the Duchess of Northumberland;¹ receipts to make them by Corydon the venerable, alias George Pitt; others very pretty, by Lord Palmerston; some by Lord Carlisle; many by Mrs. Miller herself, that have no fault but wanting metre; an Immortality promised to her without end or measure. In short, since folly, which never ripens to madness but in this hot climate, ran distracted, there never was anything so entertaining or so dull."²

The foregoing account is as pointed, spiteful and incorrect as much of Horace Walpole's gossip. He characteristically omits to add that the proceeds of the volumes at which he sneers were devoted to aid a charity for the relief of poor working men and women in Bath. The sale was large enough to add substantially to the charity's funds. Nor was Lady Miller quite so foolish as she is represented. Her three volumes of travel in Italy are as good and readable as many others, which had appeared before her day, and far better than those of Lady

¹ Dr. Johnson ridiculed the contributors with the exception of the Duchess of Northumberland, sparing her on the ground that she "may do what she pleases. Nobody will say anything to a lady of her high rank" (G. B. Hill's edition of Boswell's "Johnson," vol. ii., p. 337).

² Horace Walpole's "Letters," vol. vi., p. 172.

Blessington, upon which exaggerated praise has been lavished. Neither were the gatherings at Bath-Easton more fantastical than those at Strawberry Hill. Perhaps Horace Walpole may have been an unsuccessful competitor for a prize at Bath-Easton!

Frances Burney's mention of Lady Miller and her set is not eulogistic, yet it is less uncomplimentary than Walpole's:—"Do you know that, notwithstanding Bath-Easton is so much laughed at in London, nothing in Bath is more tonish than to visit Lady Miller, who is extremely curious in her company, admitting few persons who are not of rank and fame, and excluding of those who are not all persons of character very unblemished. . . . Lady Miller is a round, plump, coarse-looking dame of about forty, and while all her aim is to appear an elegant woman of fashion, all her success is to seem an ordinary woman in very common life, with fine clothes on. Her manners are bustling, her air is mock-important, and her manners very inelegant."¹

Lady Miller succeeded in getting many persons of note to compete for prizes as versifiers. Garrick's easy rhymes were thought suitable for publication. None of Sheridan's have been preserved. He regarded Bath-Easton from the same point of view as Horace Walpole. After *The Duenna* appeared, he made the following uncomplimentary reference to it in a letter to his father-in-law, when he was expected to write some verses by way of acknow-

¹ Madame d'Arblay's "Diary," vol. i., pp. 364, 365.

ledgment for a present, saying, "I believe I shall try a little jingle on the occasion; at least a few such stanzas as might gain a cup of tea from the urn at Bath-Easton."

While indulging in the amusements which were provided at Bath, he was not unmindful of the future. His father's income being small, he had to prepare to support himself, and he hoped to do so and grow famous also by becoming an author. He first resolved to write a farce, being convinced that he might easily earn money as a playwright, and next he staked his chances of fortune and fame upon publishing translations from the Greek. In both designs he had the approval and aid of a school-fellow at Harrow, who was his junior by five months and a friend of his youth.

This comrade and correspondent was Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, who had gone from Harrow to Christ Church, Oxford, and who was studying there while Sheridan was amusing himself in society or with his pen in Bath. The pair exchanged letters and they laid plans for advancement in the world while the one was playing the part of a young man at large in the City of Bath and the other that of a roystering undergraduate at the University of Oxford. Their confidential correspondence would have been exceedingly instructive now, if all the letters which they interchanged had been preserved. The letters from Halhed to Sheridan are extant, and I shall give copious extracts from them;¹ those of

¹ Moore writes with regard to Halhed's letters to Sheridan: "It would have given me great pleasure to have been enabled to

Sheridan to Halhed were probably consigned to the flames by a female survivor who must have regarded manuscripts as wastepaper, and who may not even have suffered the remorse which would have tormented her if she had set the chimney on fire while engaged in the wanton and lurid work of destruction.¹

In the summer of 1770, Halhed writes as if Sheridan and he had planned a book to be composed in common :—" Dear Dick :—Your letter produced at the same time two opposite sensations in me, satisfaction and uneasiness ; or rather, it dispelled one uneasiness, and brought with it another. For so long a time has elapsed between the sending of my letter and the receipt of yours, I had given you up as a correspondent ; concluding either that my lucubrations had met with some catastrophe on the road, or that you thought it not worth while to answer me. I cannot say I was offended at it, for

enliven my pages with even a few extracts from that portion of their Correspondence which has fallen into my hands. There is in the letters of Mr. Halhed a fresh youthfulness of style, and an unaffected vivacity of thought, which I question whether even his witty correspondent could have surpassed. I do not, however, feel authorized to lay these letters before the world " (*"Memoirs"* of Sheridan, octavo edition, vol. i., p. 17). Halhed was alive when Moore wrote, and this was the reason why none of the letters or extracts from them could be published in 1825. Halhed died in 1830.

¹ Mr. W. B. Halhed, a great-nephew of Sheridan's friend, who occupies a distinguished position in the world of commerce, has informed me, on the authority of a cousin, that the papers which were destroyed filled two portmanteaus, and that Sheridan's letters may have been among them.

I did not consider my trifles in a light superior to what they deserved. I thought it not unlikely that upon a second reading your ideas had sympathized with mine ; and, accordingly, having some other business on my hands, I gave up the work of tale-telling. Judge then of my surprise on receiving yours with a panegyric, I know not how long, together with a critical analization of their beauties. When you proceed to such niceties I must give up the point, and rest satisfied that others can see merit where I am purblind."

A postscript runs :—" I have a poem of 200 lines, translated from a very pretty fable of Ausonius (it is not a fable but I have not a name for it at my tongue's end, so it will serve). If you think a trifle of that sort will go down in your proposed dish, let me know in your next, and draw upon me for it at sight. I think too that the old thing we did at Harrow out of Theocritus concerning Ageanax, and those small bucks might be pruned up a little, and cut a figure ; the rather because I am sure they are all good verses, and breathe full as much of the spirit of the original as Mr. Vawkes's new translation. But of that you can give me your opinion in your next."

It cannot be determined now what Halhed meant by the " proposed dish ;" perhaps it was a series of translations from the Greek classics. Halhed treats Sheridan as a capable translator. This confirms what Dr. Parr wrote about Sheridan's classical attainments, and it tends to invalidate what others have insinuated concerning his lack of scholarship.

Halhed, according to Dr. Parr, "wrote well in Latin and Greek"; he possessed Leyden's talent for acquiring strange tongues, and, though a boy may impose upon his master, he cannot succeed in imposing upon a school-fellow who is a scholar.

On the 20th of August, 1770, Halhed states:—"I have not been able till now to send you the farce, etc., having been hindered by various obstructions; but whether idleness, company, drunkenness, singly or together, were the cause of my delay, Lambinus and Cruquius have not yet settled. Herewith you will receive another of my *Bags and Tales*. It remains to be christened by you, and perhaps if you turn Jew, and administer *circumcision* to it, it will be for the better. How little do we know our own strength or weakness! I thought it would be easy to pick up thirty or forty stories like that you have of mine, and can find but five or six. . . . Fix any time you would wish to have the remainder of my lucubrations, and I will endeavour to send them at your appointment. God bless you."

Three months later he writes with reference to a farce which he had composed and called *Ixion*: "As for your plans, alterations, etc., I hear of them but to approve of them. I have not one objection to any proposal you can make." Ten days after he said: "Pray give me your opinion about what I wrote concerning the farce t'other day. I long to hear whether my conjectures were true or no, the only thing I really regret as a misfortune is hesitation; I think nothing makes so deep an impression on my mind, and I fear the reasons I urged then were too

strongly founded for us, besides Mr. Bickerstaffe (who I believe is all for Covent Garden) threatens us with some new pieces.¹ I heard there was a new musical farce, called *The Golden Pippin*,² founded on the 'Judgment of Paris,' so that you see we are most expeditious, but should it answer the sanguinity of your expectations, it would rub off many old scores, and yet leave something to keep the Devil away. The thoughts of £200 shared between us are enough to bring tears into one's eyes."

The foregoing extracts make it clear how much Halhed had at heart the success of *Ixion*. Having done his part, he was anxious that Sheridan should not be found wanting. It is certain that Halhed had implicit confidence in his school-fellow's powers to adapt *Ixion* for the stage. In another letter, to which Halhed had omitted to add a date, as was not unusual with him or his contemporaries, he says: "As for the farce, I like your thought immensely. If Foote will promise to accept it, I know not whether it is not the best thing that can be done; but, however, act as you think most conducive to our cause."

He recurs to the subject, and it is plain from what he writes that Sheridan had changed the name of the farce from *Ixion* to *Jupiter* and that Halhed had acquiesced. He says: "I am of opinion that *Jupiter*

¹ *The Recruiting Sergeant*, a musical entertainment by Isaac Bickerstaffe, was performed at Drury Lane Theatre in 1770.

² *The Golden Pippin*, a burletta in three acts by Kane O'Hara, was not successful when first produced at Covent Garden Theatre; but, when cut down and played as an afterpiece, it became popular. It was published in 1773.

will do much better in a farce than a play. *Midas* was hissed off as a play, though it succeeds admirably in its present state; and yet the part which was omitted is not inferior in burlesque humour to that which is retained. I hope at least we shall get a freedom to the playhouses by it—for my father is monstrously vexed at *theatrical expenses*, and I want to see the nature of the green-room, etc. I hope you will keep your plan of a rehearsal—it is a very good one, but I can give you no hints.”

The obvious explanation of the last remark is that Sheridan had been struck, after reading Halhed's *Ixion*, with its adaptability as a piece in the style of the Duke of Buckingham's *Rehearsal*. His suggestions appear to have impressed Halhed favourably, and he even approved of the farce which he had composed being re-cast by his friend, in whose taste and judgment he appears to have had implicit confidence. He admitted, moreover, that the farce, as it left his hands, was not brought to a satisfactory ending, and he thus explained his intentions: “I proposed to have concluded it by bringing Amphitryon to Heaven (for which you will find I had prepared in the beginning of the third act, by Jupiter's fear on that head, a farce should have but two acts), to complain; and he should have come in just after Juno was seated in council, while Jupiter was still inveighing against her on the intelligence he had so recently received. This then would turn the tables and Juno might scold in her turn; at last all things were to be compromised between Jupiter and Juno, Amphitryon to be comforted in the birth of so mighty

a son ; Ixion for his presumption instead of being fixed to a *torturing* wheel should have been fixt to a vagrant *monotroche* as knife-grinder ; and a grand chorus of deities (intermixt with knives, scissors, penknives to grind set to music as near as possible to the natural cry) should have concluded the whole."

He writes in subsequent letters, "As for the farce, I approve your plan very highly ; and could almost ensure its success." "You were very tardy in writing to Foote [Manager of the Haymarket Theatre]. I make no doubt but fifty applications have been made, before yours came to him. However, we must hope for the best." Again, "I wish very much to hear something decisive in regard to the play."

On the 14th of October, 1771, he says, "You must likewise at all events write me an account of your proceedings with G[arrick] in the affair of The Rehearsal some time this week," and a letter which Halhed wrote to Sheridan before leaving England to become a writer in the East India Company's Service ends with the words,—"*Manage as you will about Ixion*, etc., and agree with Foote if possible." These last sentences clearly imply that "The Farce" had been submitted to Foote, who had neither rejected nor accepted it, and that an offer had been made to Garrick of which the result is not recorded.¹

¹ Moore's interpretation of the words I consider to be erroneous. He wrote: "It does not appear, however, that Sheridan ever presented this piece to any of the managers" ("Memoirs" of Sheridan, vol. i., p. 24).

Jupiter, though brimful of cleverness, was not suited for performance even after Sheridan's alterations, which Halhed rightly accepted as improvements. The plot of the farce in its original form is ingenious. Jupiter determines to visit the earth and, disguised as Amphitryon, make love to Alcmena, his wife. Ixion professes a passion for Juno during Jupiter's absence ; Juno arranges a private meeting with him, and sends Nubilis, her waiting-maid, to take her place. On Jupiter's unexpected return to the Clouds he learns what Ixion supposes to have occurred, and, being highly incensed, he summons a meeting of the Gods. The conclusion, which Halhed indicated, as I have already stated, but did not write, was to have been the binding of Ixion to a knife-grinder's wheel.¹ The piece opens with this song by Jupiter :

“ Of state intrigues and feuds and leagues,
The fuss and worry is hard ;
Dominion cuts me to the guts,
And frets my very gizzard.

“ On earth they quaff, live, love, and laugh,
Without this rout and pother ;
So I'll lay by my bolts, and try
A little of one with t'other.

¹ Disraeli in his “Ixion in Heaven” represented Ixion being bound to a wheel taken from Mercury's chariot and hurled by Hercules into Hades, while Mr. F. C. Burnand, in his “Ixion, or the Man at the Wheel,” one of the earliest of his many inimitable burlesques, makes it end by Ixion taking the wheel on board a ship.

" Early and late my hopeful mate
With nuptial din does fright one ;
We rate and swear—fight dog, fight bear ;
She snaps enough to bite one.

" If I submit to her, a chit,
I'll make a maid o' my mother.
With earth's kind fair I'll try my share :
A little of one with t'other."

Among other passages in Halhed's handwriting is a song by Ixion when he was trying to ingratiate himself with Juno. Sheridan was told by his friend that this "was intended to ridicule a part of the farce called *The Court of Alexander*, which was brought on the stage at Covent Garden last year by George Alexander Stephens" [Stevens?] :—

" Of all the flashy fiddlers who erst did proudly swell
For scraping guts of cats defunct, did Orpheus bear the bell.
He beat the God Menennius, who did from night till morn
pipe,
He'd make your liver to strike fire, your pluck to dance a horn-
pipe.

Cremona would he shoulder and roam amongst the trees
Cocksure to scrape you down a partridge, duck or geese.
He laid about him furiously for snipes, teals, cocks or quails,
And caught the sparrows thick as hops, without salt on their
tails.

Drawn from all quarters come the beasts by his magnetic hands ;
There apes in minuets sweep the ground and bears perform
Allemands.

The hedges beat a bob too, and trees so tall and taper,
They figure in and figure out and foot, and bay, and caper.
He from the notes of grinding knives sweet melody would
make,
Teach rooks to beat time as they croaked, or pigs in tune to
squeak."

The third scene represents the servants' hall in Amphitryon's house, where Mercury is seated. He has a pot of porter beside him, and in the intervals of drinking, he sings as follows :

" Jove may live as he likes—rant, hector, and swear,
With his bolts shake Olympus and Pindus ;
Juno drives him about with a flea in his ear,
And flings the whole house out of windows.

" He sneaks like a dog that has burnt off his tail,
After all his parading and boasting ;
While she jobs like a fish-wife, and sooner than fail,
Will threaten her lord a rib-roasting.

" Now I've my full swing ; care for no one a jot ;
No wife with night-lectures to dun me,
I snap up my luncheon, and quaff off my pot,
And the black ox ne'er sets his foot on me."

Nubilis enters and reproaches him with having deserted her ; he assures her that he loves her still, and their reconciliation is followed by a duet :—

MERC. " The sun at Tyburn shall be hung—

NUB. The man i' th' moon grow sick—

MERC. The stars like bugles shall be strung—

BOTH. Ere I my sweetheart trick.

NUB. The ox shall carve the butcher up—

MERC. The whitebait eat the trout ;—

NUB. And sparrows spawn, and fishes pup,—

BOTH. Ere we will once fall out."

In the second act Jupiter appears in Amphitryon's regimentals, and he is hailed by a chorus on his safe return from the wars. Nubilis, the maid of Alcmena, is doubtful whether he is the person he professes to be, but Alcmena herself has no such suspicion,

although she admits that her husband's face "is somewhat out at elbows." He exclaims that he is famished and he goes off to supper ; after having feasted, he sings a song in which he boasts that he had " humbugged the whole house." Two servants enter, overhear him and threaten to send for a constable. After they have sung a duet, Jupiter tells them to hold their peace and he begins to sing in turn :

" You dogs, I'm Jupiter imperial ;
King, emperor, and pope ethereal ;
Master o' th' ordnance in the sky ;—
Famous for hurling bolts of thunder.
Bastards ! I'll make ye both knock under,
Or know the reason why.

" D'ye think your blust'ring puffs and vapours
Can browbeat me, ye whipper-snappers ?
I'll soon make cry cavi ! zouns !
Make the least mutt'ring, growling or fuss,
You both to rats I'll metamorphose,
Or shake you to half-crowns."

The two servants declare that they believe his royal word and they beg for mercy, and, while kneeling, they sing this duet :

BOTH. " O ! forgive us for rebelling !
Pardon ! pardon ! Cloud-compelling !
1ST SERVANT. . . . By our weight of passion loaded
Little did we smoke your God-head.
2ND SERVANT. Blinded with our senses awkward,
In our *baise-mains* we were backward.
BOTH. All you ask we'll serve you willing,
Pardon ! pardon ! Cloud-compelling !
JUPITER. Rise, suppliant sinners, rise—and for the future
How to behave, ourself will be your tutor.

As god we will reverse what we as man did :
 We were to blame for coming empty-handed.
 Now to our party firmly to convert ye—
 Behold ! for each of ye a six-and-thirty
 Here—as an earnest that our godship by no
 Foul means will trick you—pocket up the rhino.

BOTH SERVANTS. All you ask we'll serve you well in,
 Bounteous—bounteous—Cloud-compelling !

JUPITER. Know that ourself doth like Alcmena well
 And here design awhile to take a spell.
 If your assistance back our royal counsel,
 Trust me Amphitryon shall not pass the
 groun-cill.

Stickle but you with might and main to aid us—
 For instance should he sneak in here upon us,
 And be for domineering in his—own house—
 Seem you to take his part—but make his chin go
 From night to morn with bumbo, flip and stingo.
 You know, altho' his head is weak by nature,
 He loves a cheering cup of the good creature.
 So mind your eye, and by contrivance handy,
 Give him this powder, in a dram of brandy

[*gives a paper*]

Here's his quietus—you but eye him close—
 He'll make no bones on't—gulp—and down
 it goes.

He'll snore, I'll warrant him, with this in's pate,
 A fortnight, without stopping once to bait.

BOTH SERVANTS. All you ask we'll serve you well in,
 Mighty, mighty, Cloud-compelling.

JUPITER. I thank you, bucks—I thank you—not to men-
 tion

For you a peerage, and for you a pension."

Amphitryon returns to his house and he refuses
 to take the potion in a glass of brandy ; Jupiter
 ascends to the clouds sooner than he had intended ;
 and, while still disguised, he meets Ixion, who boasts

of his conquest over Juno, not knowing that at the meeting which she had promised him, Nubilis had appeared as Juno in masquerade. Jupiter is horrified at the thought of his wife having been unfaithful, and he orders Mercury to summon a meeting of the Gods, and then he sings :—

" Gods great and little, heavenly, earthly, sea-gods,
Demons o' th' air and Tartarussian Pagods,
The zeal and service which your voice saith
The very cockles of my heart rejoiceth.
It grieves us to the entrails here i' th' heavens
All things to find at sixes and at sevens.
Gods nowadays, and each age, sex and quality
Have lost all virtue, modesty, morality.
Free from their rampant wickedness not one day's,
They play at whist, read comedies on Sundays.
These sad disorders need a thorough search—
I'll make 'em all do penance in the Church.
Behaviour, order, decency, decorum
They over-run and carry all before 'em.
Our royal self alone observes propriety
In prudence, justice, fortitude, sobriety."

The manuscript of this piece is in Halhed's handwriting,¹ and the initials L. Y. D. are appended, the same initials appearing at the end of some letters from him to Sheridan. There is both spirit and vigour in some lines which* have a modern ring, yet the farce as it left Halhed's hands required amendment and revision before being fitted for the stage.

¹ Mr. P. G. Patmore gives extracts from this farce in his "Friends and Acquaintance." He rashly pronounces the manuscript to be in Sheridan's handwriting, of which he was as ignorant as of the actual authorship and the relation in which Sheridan stood to Halhed.

It was greatly changed for the better by Sheridan. He had been impressed with the Duke of Buckingham's *Rehearsal* which was then often played at Drury Lane theatre, the part of Bayes being one in which Garrick excelled. Later in life he produced the *Critic*, which has supplanted the *Rehearsal*; his revision of *Ixion* took the form of both these pieces. I have already stated that he gave the name of *Jupiter* to his version; I now add that he called the personages Major Amphytrion, Sir Richard Ixion and Miss Peggy Nubilis. The following extracts exhibit the character of the changes¹ :—

"SIMILE. Sir, you are very ignorant on the subject,—it is the method most in vogue.

"O'CUL. What! to make the music first, and then make the sense to it afterwards!

"SIM. Just so.

"MONOP. What Mr. Simile says is very true, gentlemen; and there is nothing surprising in it, if we consider now the general method of writing plays to scenes.

"O'CUL. Writing *plays* to *scenes*!—oh, you are joking.

"MONOP. Not I, upon my word. Mr. Simile knows that I have frequently a complete set of scenes from Italy, and then I have nothing to do but to get some ingenious hand to write a play to them.

"SIM. I am your witness, sir. Gentlemen, you perceive you know nothing about these matters.

¹ Moore had before him the manuscript of *Jupiter* as prepared for the stage by Sheridan, but he may not have seen Halhed's *Ixion*, upon which it was based. Unfortunately, the manuscript of *Jupiter* is one out of several papers which were not returned to the Sheridan family after Moore had finished the "Memoirs" of Sheridan; consequently, I am unable to verify the accuracy of what he has already given to the world.

"O'CUL. Why, Mr. Simile, I don't pretend to know much relating to these affairs, but what I think is this, that in this method, according to your principles, you must often commit blunders.

"SIM. Blunders! to be sure I must, but I always could get myself out of them again. Why, I'll tell you an instance of it. You must know I was once a journeyman sonnet-writer to Signor Squallini. Now, his method, when seized with the *furor harmonicus*, was constantly to make me sit by his side, while he was thrumming on his harpsichord, in order to make extempore verses to whatever air he should beat out to his liking. I remember, one morning, as he was in this situation, *thrum, thrum, thrum*, (*moving his fingers as if beating on the harpsichord*), striking out something prodigiously great, as he thought,—'Hah!' said he,—'hah! Mr. Simile, *thrum, thrum, thrum*, by gar, here is vary fine,—*thrum, thrum, thrum*, write me some words directly.' I durst not interrupt him to ask on what subject, so instantly began to describe a fine morning.

'Calm was the land and calm the seas,
And calm the heaven's dome serene,
Hush'd was the gale and hush'd the breeze,
And not a vapour to be seen.'

I sang it to his notes—'Hah!—upon my vord vary pritt,—*thrum, thrum, thrum*,—stay, stay,—*thrum, thrum*,—Hoa, upon my vord, here it must be an adagio,—*thrum, thrum*,—oh! let it be an *Ode to Melancholy*.'

"MONOP. The Devil!—there you were puzzled sure.

"SIM. Not in the least,—I brought in a cloud in the next stanza, and matters, you see, came about at once.

"MONOP. An excellent transition.

"O'CUL. Vastly ingenious indeed.

"SIM. Was it not? hey! it required a little command,—a little presence of mind,—but I believe we had better proceed.

"MONOP. The sooner the better—come, gentlemen, resume your seats.

"SIM. Now for it. Draw up the curtain, and (*looking at his book*) enter Sir Richard Ixion,—but stay—zounds, Sir Richard ought to overhear Jupiter and his wife quarrelling,—but, never mind—these accidents have spoiled the division of my piece. So

enter Sir Richard, and look as cunning as if you had overheard them. Now for it, gentlemen,—you can't be too attentive.

Enter SIR RICHARD IXION, completely dressed, with bag, sword, etc.

"IX. 'Fore George, at logger-heads,—a lucky minute,
'Pon honour, I may make my market in it.
Dem it, my air, address, and mien must touch her,
Now out of sorts with him,—less God than butcher.
O rat the fellow,—where can all his sense lie,
To gallify the lady so immensely?
Ah! *le grand (sic) bête qu'il est!*—how rude the bear is!
The world to twopence he was ne'er at Paris.
Perdition stap my vitals,—now or never
I'll niggle snugly into Juno's favour.
Let's see,—[*looking in a glass*], my face—toll loll—'twill
work upon her.
My person?—oh, immense, upon my honour.
My eyes?—oh fie,—the naughty glass it flatters,—
Courage!—*Ixion flogs the world to tatters.*¹ [*Exit IXION.*

"SIM. There is a fine gentleman for you,—in the very pink of the mode, with not a single article about him his own,—his words pilfered from Magazines, his address from French valets, and his clothes not paid for.

"MACD. But pray, Mr. Simile, how did Ixion get into heaven?

"SIM. Why, sir, what's that to anybody?—perhaps by Salmonesus's Brazen Bridge, or the Giant's Mountain, or the Tower of Babel, or on Theobald's bull-dogs, or—who the devil cares how?—he is there and that's enough."

"SIM. Now for a Phoenix of a song.

Song by JUPITER.

"You dogs, I'm Jupiter imperial;
King, emperor, and pope ethereal;
Master of th' ordnance of the sky.

¹ This speech of Ixion is by Halhed. I did not quote it when giving extracts from his version of the farce.

"SIM. Z——ds, where's the ordnance? Have you forgot the pistol? (*To the Orchestra.*)

"ORCHESTRA (*to some one behind the scenes*). Tom, are not you prepared?

"TOM (*from behind the scenes*). Yes, Sir, but I flash'd in the pan a little out of time, and had I staid to prime, I should have shot a bar too late.

"SIM. Oh then.—Jupiter, begin the song again.—We must not lose our ordnance.

"You dogs, I'm Jupiter imperial;

King, emperor, and pope ethereal;

Master of th' ordnance of the sky; etc. etc.

(*Here a pistol or cracker is fired from behind the scenes.*)

"SIM. This hint I took from Handel.—Well, how do you think we go on?

"O'CUL. With vast spirit,—the plot begins to thicken.

"SIM. Thicken! aye,—'twill be as thick as the calf of your leg presently. Well, now for the real, original, patentee Amphitryon. What, ho, Amphitryon! Amphitryon!—'tis Simile calls.—Why, where the devil is he?

Enter SERVANT.

"MONOP. Tom, where is Amphitryon?

"SIM. Zounds, he's not arrested too, is he?

"SERV. No, Sir, but there was *one black eye* in the house, and he is waiting to get it from Jupiter.

"SIM. To get a black eye from Jupiter—oh! this will never do. Why, when they meet, they ought to match like two beef-eaters."

While Halhed and Sheridan were preparing a piece for the stage, they were also planning a metrical version of the Greek prose of Aristænetus. Why they should have selected Aristænetus as the subject of a new venture baffles explanation. The book which bears his name is seldom read, and little that is authentic is known about him. It is probable that he lived towards the end of the fifth century, while

it is certain that his work, which was first edited by Sambucus and printed in 1566, is a compilation from the writings of Plato, and Lucian, of Philostratus and Plutarch. As Halhed appears from his letters to have been very amorous in disposition, he may have been attracted by the love and love-making which constitute the themes of the passages in prose collected by Aristænetus.

The translation appeared in 1771; the initials "H. S." are at the end of the preface, and the work is commonly regarded as a joint production. The truth is that Halhed made the translation and Sheridan revised and corrected it.¹ The first reference to the subject occurs in a letter written at Oxford by Halhed, which is dated the 17th of November, 1770: "I am most excessively astonished at the receipt of your letter, which informs me that you have not received *Aristænetus*. I sent it a week ago, together with the Greek original, by a Mr. Court, who is at Bath with Governor Verelst. . . . If my *Aristænetus* should be lost, my garters are the only remedy, for I have no other copy, and cannot remember anything."

It is obvious that Halhed meant by "my *Aristænetus*" his English version, of which he had no copy. He writes in the next letter:—"Many of my

¹ If Moore had read Halhed's letters with care he would not have blundered by attributing a single epistle to Sheridan's pen, while he might have said that Sheridan was preparing translations for a second part which was projected, but which never appeared. Having inferred that some of the epistles were by Sheridan, Moore displayed misplaced ingenuity in detecting Sheridan's manner in lines which he never wrote.

acquaintances have seen my *Aristænetus*, and with approbation." Again :—"I am never so happy as when I know you are altering anything of mine, for by the word of a brother poet I feel that too sensibly how little all my πολυθρολήτοι abilities can do, but I must be content in a consciousness of my own ignorance. . . . Pray add and correct whatever you like, for I have some time had full belief and confidence that every correction of yours would be an *emendation*, and every addition a new perfection. But only I could wish that no egotisms be admitted into the Preface, and should not like to have too many apologies, as I would not seem to cringe and crouch to the public too much. Pray do not hesitate a moment for my approbation. I have told you already that I most perfectly confide in your judgment ; and am very happy that my trifles meet so candid a review, for I assure you a damned fool or two of my friends here (to whom I read them) said they could not find a line to alter. . . . I suppose they were too idle ; or I am convinced they might have found most ample ground for criticism." He writes in a subsequent letter :—"As for *Aristænetus* you must carve and correct him as you will, but you must likewise share the good things he produceth ; as for the 'fruits of Nature's womb,' I meant trees : so do pray find some better expression for them ; for if you knew my natural antipathy to correction, you would pity me : besides, when a man has conceived within himself that he has completed any work, to be obliged to begin again, is the devil, or something worse. I have made a few notes, or

rather illustrations of the subjects of each epistle, which I from the first intended should come under your inspection. My Preface I have finished, but it will be very glad of any addition or elimination from your pen."

Halhed valued his friend's knowledge and judgment so highly as to regard his labours as equal in value to his own, and such as to entitle him to a joint share in the honour and profit of the work. Both of them were young men and necessarily inexperienced. Their united ages numbered thirty-eight years. They had the sanguine hopes of youth and the audacity of those who have never encountered obstacles, or given them a thought. They both looked forward, with the confidence which the young and the ignorant alone feel in good faith and fullest measure, to their play being accepted at the Haymarket or Drury Lane Theatre, and to their volume making a sensation in the world of letters. No manager would put their play on the stage, yet they were so fortunate as to find a publisher for their book, and they were spared that part of an author's first martyrdom which, according to Heinrich Heine, is the quest for a publisher. An edition of the book sold soon after its appearance, but nothing was paid to them. Had they been wholly dependent upon the returns from it for subsistence, they would have experienced the second part of many an author's martyrdom, which is to starve.

The two young friends were to part company before either had reached his twenty-first year. Halhed depicts his own character in his letters. He

was more devoted to pleasure than to study, while nourishing great plans and greater expectations. He versified with ease and his verses are clever ; but he was unstable. The following passage in one of his letters is a condensed fragment of autobiography :—"Believe me, Dick, you had no occasion to write upon the inutility of learning to me ; I now make observations upon myself, and my own acquisitions in the literary world, but my reflections end in a consciousness that I want common sense ; and not only that, but taste, judgment, nicety, genius, invention, application, and every other qualification a man would wish to attain. Perhaps I study for a month, but then I obliterate the remembrance of it by a month of riot and stupidity. Half the year my passions and my senses enjoy a listless anarchy, and the other half is spent in the ineffectual struggles of my reason to bring them to order."

The foregoing words in which Halhed depicts himself, represent the conventional and prevailing view of Sheridan. They would not have been addressed to him, however, unless the writer had thought that Sheridan was unlike himself in the failings which he confessed and regretted. He admired his comrade's wit and respected his abilities. Halhed thus wrote in the first letter to Sheridan : "I find that a hint is enough to set your pen going for a week. Who would have thought that any trifling expression of mine could have given rise to that tide of wit which flowed from the beginning through the first half of your letter!"

Their partnership in dreams of fame and opulence,

and in productions which displayed more enterprise than genius, was abruptly dissolved to their mutual sorrow. Halhed's father procured for him in 1771 a writership in the East India Company's Service. In those days such an office was eagerly sought after. The holder of it was regarded as being comfortably provided for life. Writing to Sheridan on the 29th of July, 1771, Halhed says that his "fate is positively determined." He adds, "I think, Dick, the best thing you can do is to accompany me. Your abilities cannot fail to distinguish you in a place where wit is of great recommendation, and where such qualifications as yours must place you in a most exalted sphere."

If Sheridan had gone to India when a young man, his biographer would have had a different, though, perhaps, a not less fascinating story to tell. Halhed's prediction might have been verified and he would probably have risen to an "exalted sphere," have grown as attached to Warren Hastings as Halhed himself and returned home to defend Hastings with an eloquence as splendid and incomparable as that which he displayed when advocating his impeachment, and urging that he should be punished with merciless rigour by the High Court of Parliament.

No correspondence between them after Halhed's departure for Calcutta has been preserved. Their paths diverged; their interests ran in opposite channels; their abilities were shown in very different ways. When Sheridan became manager of Drury Lane Theatre, and shortly before he produced his great and classic comedy, Halhed appeared before

the public as the translator of the Gentoo code of law. His dedication of this work to Warren Hastings is in a different strain from his letters to Sheridan ; a marvellous change had been wrought. The dedication, which was written in 1776, explains his relation to Hastings : " By the publication of the collection of Gentoo laws, made under your immediate authority, I find myself involuntarily held forth to the public as an author, almost as soon as I have commenced to be a man. It is therefore with some propriety that I claim to this work the continuation of your patronage, which, as it at first selected me from a number of more worthy competitors to undertake the task, so it has by constant assistance and encouragement been the entire instrument of its completion. Indeed, if all the lights which, at different periods, have been thrown upon this subject, by your happy suggestions, had been withheld there would have remained for my share of the performance nothing but a mass of obscurity and confusion ; so that in your own right, the whole result of the execution is yours, as well as the entire merit of the original plan. It is my earnest wish that you may long be the prime administrator of an establishment to which you have excellently paved the way ; as I am sure your extensive general knowledge, joined to your particular experience in the affairs of India, give you advantages which can scarcely fall to the share of any other subject of the British Empire."

Halhed returned to England in 1785. When he and Sheridan met again it was in the position of strangers, and as antagonists in the proceedings con-

cerning Warren Hastings. They sat in Parliament ; but on opposite sides of the House. Halhed spoke three times only during the five years that he was a member of the House of Commons. His maiden speech was delivered on the 31st of March, 1796 ; he stated at the outset that he had "preserved a uniform and respectful silence" since entering the House in 1791 as member for Lymington. Though listened to, he could not get a seconder for a motion to the effect that "The books of Richard Brothers, entitled 'A Revealed Knowledge,' etc., be laid upon the table." Three weeks afterwards he made a second speech and a motion which also fell to the ground for lack of a seconder ; it was to the effect that "a copy of the warrant for apprehending Richard Brothers be laid before the House." This man was a fanatic who, after living for a time on vegetables, announced that he was commissioned by the Almighty to take the place of George the Third. On the 10th of November, 1795, Halhed spoke against the Seditious Meetings Bill. Sheridan opposed the Bill also, and both Halhed and he voted with the minority against it. Halhed then returned to private life. He had written to Sheridan in 1770 : "My reflections end in a consciousness that I want common sense." His conduct in Parliament demonstrated how correctly he had judged himself.

Halhed left India with a competence ; but, after arriving at home, he was impoverished by injudicious speculation in French assignats. However, the appointment of Secretary to the East India Company, which he obtained in 1809, made his life easy again.

He collected oriental manuscripts, wrote on oriental topics, and he penned epigrams in imitation of Martial. His life ended on the 18th of February, 1830, fourteen years after that of the schoolfellow whose career I am narrating. As the story of Halhed's early days is still incomplete, as regards the relation between him and Sheridan, further particulars concerning it will be given in the next chapter.

IV.

LITERARY SCHEMES.

WHILE Halhed and Sheridan were preparing the farce of *Jupiter* for the stage and a versified translation of the Epistles of *Aristænetus* for publication, Sheridan was revolving other literary ventures in his mind. In a letter to him from Halhed on the 16th of April [1771] it is said :—"Whatever your new plan is (of which I have not the most distant idea) I shall be glad to coincide in it, and do whatever service may be in my power." This may refer to a projected comedy, of which the following fragment in Sheridan's handwriting has been preserved :—

"M[anager ?]. Sir, I have read your Comedy, and I think it has infinite merit, but, pray, don't you think it rather grave ?

"S[andy ?]. Sir, you say true ; it is grave comedy. I follow the opinion of Longinus, who says comedy ought always to be sentimental. Sir, I value a sentiment of six lines in my piece no more than a Nabob does a rupee. I hate those dirty, paltry equivocations which go by the name of puns, and pieces of wit. No, Sir, it ever was my opinion that the stage

should be a place of rational entertainment ; instead of which, I am very sorry to say, most people go there for their diversion : accordingly, I have formed my comedy so that it is no laughing, giggling piece of work. He must be a very light man that shall discompose his muscles from beginning to the end.

"M. But don't you think it may be too grave ?

"S. O never fear ; and as for hissing, mon, they might as well hiss the Common Prayer-Book ; for there is the viciousness of vice and the virtuousness [of virtue] in every third line.

"M. I confess there is a great deal of moral in it ; but, Sir, I should imagine if you tried your hand at a tragedy——

"S. No, mon, there you are out, and I'll relate to you what put me first on writing a comedy. You must know I had composed a very fine tragedy about the valiant Bruce. I showed it to my Laird of Mackintosh, and he was a very candid mon, and he said my genius did not lie in tragedy : I took the hint, and, as soon as I got home, began my comedy."

Sheridan was prolific in projects for earning popular favour. He thought of writing a dissertation on ancient and modern pastoral poetry, and his friend wrote : "I like very much your idea." He had written epigrams and crazy tales, and Halhed told him : "I admire your epigrams, a collection of them would do great things"; and asked, "Are the Crazy Tales never to quit their confinement?" Sheridan had proposed that a periodical should be founded, to be called *Hernan's Miscellany*, and

Halhed wrote :—"Although you have given me a perfect idea of what Mr. Hernan (whom I would rather call Herman) [is to be], yet till I see you and know the scope of your plan, and what sort of papers you have written, I cannot determine to write anything in that way." In a succeeding letter he said :—"I think the title of your periodical work should not be the 'Miscellany'—every other paper of that kind has some distinguishing name, and when so fair a mark as 'The Reformer' has not yet been touched on, I think it will not be a bad aim for us. I hope Mr. Hernan's character will be very *outré*. I think as a reformer he should be old, and as an old man opinionative, though one of the best men in the world in the main ; yet he may reasonably have a few particularities, which will give a characteristic appearance to the piece. But you know best, as I before said, so if Mr. H. is but twenty years old, I'll endeavour to do my best for him."

Halhed exerted himself to get contributors and wrote that he had almost secured one in the person of Dr. Schomberg's son, of whom he says :—"I chose him for the versatility of his genius. We do not want deep-read Bookworms, nor logical Block-heads, *a quick conception and a speedy delivery* are the requisites in our profession, but you shall know him (for you will be introduced to him before you determine)." Recurring to young Schomberg, he writes :—"As for our third member, I can say nothing, for I find he does not go to Bath this vacation, and I should not by any means choose to

add so important a link to our chain, till you had examined its strength and temper, for I may be deceived in the metal, or in the fabricature, and a dead weight would be intolerable upon us. So that if you find any person whom you think venturous enough to launch into the ocean of ink, and sailor enough to steer properly through it, by all means send a press-gang after him. I own I think myself unfit for the purpose ; I do not sufficiently see into mankind." The two differed in opinion as to the price, Halhed thinking it should be fixed at threepence a copy, while Sheridan preferred sixpence, but deferred to his friend's opinion. After Halhed hoped that everything had been arranged, he was undeceived, and thus expressed himself on the 16th of April, 1771 :—" I am horribly vexed with you for giving up all thoughts of Mr. Hernan. All I objected to was the *title*, the plan I approved, and still approve, and I make no doubt it would conduce to the recompense of its authors, much more than *Aristænetus* or even *Jupiter*, god as he is. The only new three-penny paper which I heard of was *The Trifler*, and I imagine the success of that was but *trifling*, as I never met with it but in the column of advertisements. I don't believe it was taken in at one coffee-house. So that I see no reason in the world why we should defer to another winter a project big with so much expectation : the establishment of which on a good footing *now*, would preclude the attempts of adventurers in embryo hereafter. I do not indeed think so good an opportunity is to be regained, if we fling the present chance away. There is so good an

opportunity for us that I am all agog to enter it. Pray think seriously of this, and I hope speedily, for not an hour is to be lost."¹ Halhed's disappointment was the more bitter because his hopes had soared very high. He had written concerning the arrangements for publishing: "We must not rely upon the profits of these [numbers] at first; but if they are settled upon a snug footing we shall have more money than we shall know how to dispose of."²

In planning and discussing a literary project with his friends, Sheridan felt perfectly at home, and the prospect of success dazzled his sanguine mind. He found it easy enough to note down subjects to be treated. When the hour arrived, however, for preparing a work for publication, his embarrassment began. Failing to give the desired form to his fancies, he laid aside the pen in despair and turned his mind to something else. It was his misfortune in early manhood not to have a definite object before his eyes, and to be his own master without having the means to support the part with credit.

While he had a lively and light-headed friend at

¹ Halhed sometimes remonstrated with Sheridan for his carelessness: "Pray, Dick, spell my name right. I don't care a farthing about it, but as we are commencing *hommes d'affaires* (I don't know whether that is a good term for men of business) we should learn to be exact, you know."

² Moore wrote at p. 27, vol. i. of his "Memoirs" of Sheridan that "this meditated *Miscellany* never proceeded beyond the first number." He had before him but a small part of it carefully written, and rough drafts of the remainder. All that is worth reproducing will be found in the Appendix to this volume, without the editing which Moore thought fit to perform.

Oxford in the person of Halhed, he had a sober, sensible, and most useful one in London named Lewis Ker, who, as has been stated, had acted as his private tutor during the interval of his training at Harrow to that of his removal to Bath. His feelings for Ker after leaving London continued to be most affectionate. The letters which Ker wrote to Sheridan are filled with good advice, while they manifest the ardent wish of the writer to serve his former pupil, who confided his projects to him and requested his help. The farce named *Jupiter* was submitted to Ker in the hope that he would get it accepted by the manager of a theatre. When the establishment of a periodical was contemplated, the aid of Ker was again evoked, and he replied, with incontestable point, that, if successful, there would be "no doubt of profit accruing." He succeeded in obtaining a publisher to produce it at the cost of the authors, neither of whom had any money, while Ker was to indemnify this self-sacrificing publisher "in case the periodical should not sell." His letter was written on the 30th of October, 1770, and is the first from him which has been preserved:—"I am favoured with yours of the 25th, which I had the pleasure of receiving yesterday. When the farce is ready, I will present it to Mr. Colman, etc., as you desire. As to your intended periodical paper, if it meets with success, there is no doubt of profit accruing, as I have already engaged a publisher of established reputation to undertake it for the account of the authors. But I am to indemnify him in case it should not sell, and to advance part of the first ex-

pense ; all which I can do without applying to Mr. Ewart. But you are much out as to the price. No periodical can be sold higher than 3d. It must contain one sheet and a half, or six folio pages, the first to contain 25 lines (besides the title and flourishes), the last about 30 lines and each of the other four something less than 50, making in the whole 240 to 250 lines, not less than 10 or more than 12 words to a line.

“Such a paper has lately made its appearance. It is entitled *The Tickler*, one of which I have seen, and think it a very middling or rather poor performance. I would be glad to know what stock of papers you have already written, as there ought to be ten or a dozen at least finished before you print any ; in order to have time to prepare the subsequent numbers and ensure a continuance of the work. As to the coffee-houses, you must not depend on their taking it in at first, except you go on the plan of *The Tatler*, and give the news of the week. For the first two or three weeks the expense of advertising will certainly prevent any profit being made. But when that is over, if 1,000 are sold weekly, you may reckon on receiving £5 clear.”

Mr. Ker wrote on the 7th of May, 1771, and began with sound advice of which Sheridan and many contemporaries stood in need: “Letters ought to be dated. I begin this letter with a pen newly-made ; I never in my life could cut a pen well ; yours that came by the stage-coach is so long, I never shall be able to get the whole answered in the compass of half a sheet : this ink is bad too ! Your compliment is rather

too high, and as to the epigram I had absolutely forgot it ; but now recollect it was something in praise of wine, which I translated when quite sober, and do not mean to justify the sentiments.

" Your *Aristænetus* is in the hands of Mr. Wilkie in St. Paul's Churchyard, and to put you out of suspense at once, will certainly make his appearance about the 1st of June next in the form of a neat volume, price 3/-, or 3/6, as may best suit his size etc., which cannot be more nearly determined at present. I have undertaken the task of correcting the press.

" All your directions shall be attended to. Mr. Wilkie has correspondents both at Oxford and Bath. The enclosed is Mr. Foote's answer, and as I have taken the liberty to peruse the contents, must say it is as favourable as you could expect. If you transmit me the piece [the Farce], I will wait on him with it without delay. You see there is no time to be lost.

" Some of the epistles that I have perused seem to me elegant and poetical ; in others I could not observe equal beauty—and here and there I could wish there was some little amendment. You will pardon this liberty I take and set it down to the account of old-fashioned friendship.

" Just arrived your letter by post. Heyday ! What an impatient man you are !

" I have been four days out of town, since I wrote last, but have neglected nothing that could be done to forward your publication. Well, this letter requires no farther answer, and now I think I have done, which is more than I expected. If you are

not in a great hurry when you write next and the half-sheet will allow it, pray let me have some of your Bath-news. How is my friend C[harles] F[rancis] S[heridan] Esqr. ? What is a doing etc. etc. etc. If my scribbling humour ever returns, since you desire it, you may one day perhaps have an epistle of a tedious length from Dr. S^r yr. aff^t etc. L. Ker."

In 1771, as in other years, an author is apt to be dissatisfied with the printer's rate of progress. Both Halhed and Sheridan were very young authors and both were authors in a hurry.

Halhed wrote in April, 1771: "I am glad to hear from you (for that is the first I have heard of it,) that our Greek nymphs and swains are likely to make an appearance in the busy world. Though the advertisements may (for aught I know) be out about this time, as it is about a week since I looked at any newspaper. As for the second part, I am ready to take whatever part you like I should. You may, if you will, draw upon me at three or four days' sight for an epistle, and I will do my best to *honour* your bill, or you may send me word which letters you choose to allot to me, and I will finish them as soon as I can. Sure printing is very slow; for you tell me *Aristænetus* was in the press *some Thursday in March*, though which Thursday you mean I cannot guess; and I should think he ought to be forthcoming by the middle of April. . . . I should be glad to know in your next what emoluments you think we have a right to expect from our labours, in giving the fair sex an opportunity of seeing how Love Letters were written by Grecians. I am told

that the author of that ridiculous farrago called 'Puck's Midnight Revels' gained £25 clear money by it. Sure our work, which contains about three times as much in quantity, and, I flatter myself, ten times as much in quality, ought to reward its *manufacturers* with some more valuable consideration. But, for God's sake, expedite the publication. Bid the devil work both oar and sail (as he did in Milton's Chaos) to finish it, for the season advances very fast, and the town will be empty for the reception of our stranger." Much of Halhed's anxiety for the appearance of the book was due to the fear that, "so many things are continually coming out, people will have no money left by the time we wish to come in play."

The following letter from Mr. Ker, dated the 16th of May, 1771, did not allay the impatience of Sheridan and his friend :—"Printing books really is a tedious thing, and tho' since the rec^d of your last I have been endeavouring to spur on Mr. Wilkie, and he has promised to dispatch the publication with all possible expedition, yet I cannot say there is any chance for poor A[ristæne]tus's appearance before the 1st of July. But take notice I mention the 1st. Mr. Wilkie, who I find, has a good opinion of the work, says, a book of merit will always sell, let the town be full or empty. So much for A[ristænetu]s. I have dispatched a card as from H.H. at Owen's Coffee-house to Mr. Foot[e] to inform him that he may expect to see your dramatic piece about the 25th inst.

"I am obliged to you for your Bath-news and

your piece of the *Chronicle*. The verses carry the marks of haste, but however are very tolerable and the subject extremely fit for satyr.¹ N.B. the letter escaped being tax'd double postage. I'm glad C[harles] F[rancis] S[heridan] is so well. If he sometimes exercises the mind as well as the body it will not be amiss. I cannot forget that he began Latin.

"Please to present my complim^{ts} to all whom you think it may be agreeable to, and suppose everything that friendship may suggest whenever I omit mentioning them. What third thing is that you have *in petto* to surprise—yr aff^d frd & ser^t L. Ker."

The next letter is dated the 25th of June, 1771 :—
"Yours of the 19th did not come to my hands till the 21st in the evening, since which time various avocations have prevented my writing. How comes it to pass that you are ever in appearance indolent without being really so I cannot conjecture ; for I find you have some excuse always ready ; much may be ascribed to the fortuitous concourse of events, but I cannot absolutely acquit you of the charge, till the arrival of your theatric piece [the farce styled Jupiter], *et adhuc sub judice lis est*.

"As to A[ristænetus]'s appearance, I fear it will not be even so speedy as I promised in my last. I have already corrected from the press but 80 pages. The Whitsun-holidays unfortunately came across, and for a whole week no printer, composer or devil could be got to work. When we are near enough

¹ The verses may have been those entitled "Clio's Protest, or the Picture Varnished," see p. 139.

the finishing, an Advertisement shall appear in 2 or 3 papers, etc., according to directions.—I rejoice to hear that your second volume is likely to follow soon after the first.¹

“ Mr. S. Ewart got safe to town ; but I suppose, cannot soon repeat his visit as Mr. Ewart, sen., sets out on a tour to France next Thursday morning.

“ I hope I shall have the honour of seeing your father when he comes to town. I need not tell you I wish his schemes may succeed—Complim^{ts} to him, Ch^r etc. I am Dr. Sr. ever yr most obdt Sert—Lew. Ker.”

A month later, Mr. Ker reported the progress of the work which he had undertaken to see through the press, and he added some remarks which show him to have been a most considerate as well as a practical Mentor:—“ I this day corrected the last sheet of *Aristænet[us]* so that now there remains only to work it off from the press, and afterwards to have the book finished at the binder's. Next week I shall be able to inform you of all the particulars of the expense, etc., and can at the same time execute your commissions if you do not think it rather proper to defer that matter for some time, as it is the opinion not only of Mr. Wilkie [the publisher] but all the publishers that this is a very improper time [the month of August] to send any new book into the world. Could we have got it ready in June, it might have stood some chance ; but all agree that August is the very worst month in the year for a

¹ This volume never appeared. Sheridan was to have been the chief contributor to it.

publication. They add that September is little better, and that the beginning of October is quite early enough.

"I hope you have fortitude enough to bear this disappointment with *patience*. But as the delay is intended to insure success to the sale, I need say no more. . . . I thank you for your kind wish of *health and spirits*, as they nearly contain my *summum bonum*. Wealth I have lived so long without, I should look upon its acquisition now rather as an encumbrance. May you live happy by placing your happiness in nothing that is out of your power, but ruling your appetites and commanding your passions, may you never want anything really necessary."

The following letter shows how he thought, as others have done also, that they might explain in verse what they could not do in prose :—"I have now, for the first time, two of your epistles to answer. Yours of the 6th [of August] is too sublime for me to pretend making a suitable reply, therefore I pass on to that of the 7th which, containing plain reason, is more adapted to my capacity. I shall then inform you, in a few words, what has been done in consequence of my having received it.

"The printing part has been completed this morning, all the sheets dry except the last, and the work is now actually at the book-binder's, out of whose hands, some copies are expected in 3 or 4 days. The book will be advertis'd to-morrow in some evening paper, (price, bound, 3s.—the size of the volume not entitling it to a farthing more) and in the course of this week perhaps Mr. Arist[ænetus]

may make his appearance in Bath. You will do me the justice to imagine everything has been conducted as much for the advantage of the publication as possible, but the necessity being so urgent of sending your child into the world at this improper season, you must not expect the affair will turn out to much profit. As for the pupil of nature just published,¹ (not to say it goes off here very slowly,) you may well suppose the name of Voltaire is thought a sufficient counter-balance to the unseasonable time of its appearance. I shall only add—*jacta est alea*—and I wish you success.

“P.S. This morning I began a paragraph in blank verse, by way of answer to your two letters—but not liking what I had written tore the paper. However, on second thoughts I shall transcribe it here by way of amusement :—

“Yours of the 6th and 7th are both before me.
This in a moment tells me how you rage
But that informs me you are calm again.
The soul, secure in her own strength, disdains
Th’ impetuous assaults of warring passions ;
And tho’ they seem all-conquering for a while,
Yet bringing up her close reserves of reason
By long experience us’d to victory,
They stand the shock, and better disciplin’d,
Repel tumultuous violence with ease ;
Recover all the ground by passions won,
And force them to retreat, nay more, submit,
Lay down their arms, and yielding own her sway,
Promising for the future to obey.”

¹ “*The Pupil of Nature; a true History*, found among the papers of Father Quesnel. From the French.”

The foregoing lines have a value greater than that which their author may have considered intrinsic. When the time arrived for *The Critic* to be written, Sheridan had before him a model of burlesque blank verse.

The last letter from Mr. Ker to Sheridan which has been preserved is dated the 29th of August, 1771:

“I rec^d your fav^r of the 21st and 26th. both in due time, have found out Mr. H[alhed] (to whom I gave four copies of A[ristænetus] bound), and am glad you are pleased with the parcel sent you, being the best decorated of any. Advertising is continued, and to be continued thro’ September, but not always in the same paper, for your Grecians¹ love variety. I do not despair of getting a tolerable acc^t from Wilkie, but first must suffer a few months to take their course. He has disposed of just 7 dozen in the wholesale way, (to other booksellers) but very few as yet by retail. However, [it] begins to make some noise and is father’d on Mr. Johnson author of the Eng. dic^y etc. See to-day’s *Gazetteer*. The critics are admirable in discovering a conceal’d author by his style, manner, etc.

“Mr. Sim[on] Ew[art] I have seen this morning. An uninterrupted flow of business with his father’s absence he says hitherto prevented him from writing to C[harles?], but his father being now come home and easing him of a part of the labour—he will write very soon.—I am with comp^{ts} etc., Dr. Sr. yr very obed S^t L. Ker.”²

¹ Frequenters of the Grecian Coffee-house?

² As a second edition of *Aristænetus* appeared in 1773, Mr.

While left to his own devices at Bath, no fault was found with Sheridan's conduct. His sisters always regarded him with warm affection, and a good brother is seldom a bad boy. If his father had been dissatisfied, he would not have had any compunction in writing strongly and acting with vigour. The correspondence relating to him at this period is but meagre; the most instructive part of it being a letter from Mr. Sheridan to Richard Brinsley and one from him in return.

The first is dated Dublin, the 7th of December, 1771 :—" My dear Richard, How could you be so wrong-headed as to commence cold bathing at such a season of the year, and I suppose without any preparation too? You have paid sufficiently for your folly, but I hope the ill effects of it have been long since over. You and your brother are fond of quacking, a most dangerous disposition with regard to health. Let slight things pass away of themselves; in a case that requires assistance do nothing without advice. Mr. Crooke is a very able man in his way; should a physician be at any time wanting, apply to Dr. Nesbitt, and tell him that at leaving Bath I recommended you all to his care. This indeed I intended to have mentioned to him, but it slipped my memory. I forgot Mr. Crooke's bill, too, but desire I may have the amount by the next letter. Pray what is the meaning of my hearing so seldom from Bath? Six weeks here, and but two letters!

Wilkie cannot have been a loser by his venture. The accruing profit was probably appropriated by him.

You were very tardy ; what are your sisters about? I shall not easily forgive any future omissions. I suppose Charles received my answer to his, and the twenty pound bill from Whateley. I shall order another to be sent at Xmas for the rent and other necessaries. I have not time at present to enter upon the subject of English authors, etc., but shall write to you upon that head when I get a little leisure.

“ Nothing can be conceived in a more deplorable state than the stage of Dublin. I found two miserable companies opposing and starving each other. I chose the least bad of them ; and wretched as they are, it has had no effect on my nights, numbers having been turned away every time I played, and the recits [sic] have been larger than when I had Barry, his wife, and Mrs. Fitz-Henry to play with me. However, I shall not be able to continue it long, as there is no possibility of getting up a sufficient number of plays with such poor materials. I purpose to have done the week after next, and apply vigorously to the material point which brought me over. I find all ranks and parties very zealous for forwarding my scheme [of education] and have reason to believe it will be carried in Parliament after the recess, without opposition. It was in vain to have attempted it before, for never was party violence carried to such a height as in this session ; the House seldom breaking up till eleven or twelve at night. From these contests, the desire of improving in the article of elocution is become very general. There are no less than five persons of rank and fortune now awaiting my leisure to become

my pupils. Remember me to all friends—particularly to our good landlord and landlady. I am, with love and blessing to you all, your affectionate father, Thomas Sheridan.

“P.S. Tell your sisters I shall send the poplins as soon as I can get an opportunity.”

Sheridan wrote, on Friday, February 29, 1772 : “Dear Father,—We have been for some time in hopes of receiving a letter, that we might know that you had acquitted us of neglect in writing ; at the same time, we imagine that the time is not far when writing will be unnecessary ; and we cannot help wishing to know the posture of the affairs which, as you have not talked of returning, seem probable to detain you longer than you intended. I am perpetually asked when Mr. Sheridan is to have his patent for the theatre, which all the Irish here take for granted ; and I often receive a great deal of information from them on the subject, yet I cannot help being vexed when I see in the Dublin papers such bustling accounts of the proceedings of your House of Commons, as I remember it was your argument against attempting anything from Parliamentary authority in England. However, the Folckes [sic] here regret you, as one that is to be fixed in another kingdom, and will scarcely believe that you will ever visit Bath at all, and we are often asked if we have not received the letter which is to call us over.

“I could scarcely have believed that the winter was so near departing, were I not now writing after dinner by daylight ; indeed, the first winter-season

is not yet over at Bath. They have balls, concerts, etc., at the rooms, from the old subscription still. and the spring ones are immediately to succeed them. They are, likewise, going to perform oratorios here. Mr. Linley and his whole family, down to the seven-year-olds, are to support one set at the new rooms, and a band and singers from London another at the old.

"Our weather here, or the effects of it, have been so uninviting to all kinds of birds, that there has not been the smallest excuse to take a gun into the fields this winter, a point more to the regret of Charles than me.

"We are all now in dolefuls here for the Princess Dowager,¹ but, as there was no necessity for our being dressed or weeping mourners, we were easily provided. Our acquaintances stand pretty much the same as when you left us, only that I think in general we are less intimate, by which, I believe, you will not think us great losers [sic]. indeed, excepting Mr. Wyndham, I have not met with one person with whom I would wish to be intimate, tho' there was a Mr. Luttrell (brother to y^e Colonel), who was, some months ago, introduced to me by an old Harrow acquaintance, who made me many professions at parting, and wanted me vastly to name some way in which he could be useful to me ; but the relying on *acquaintances* or *seeking* of friendships is a fault which I think I shall always have prudence to avoid.

¹ The wife of Frederick, Prince of Wales, and the mother of George the Third. She died on the 8th of February, 1772.

"Lissy begins to be tormented again with the toothache, otherwise we are all well. I am, Sir, your sincerely dutiful and affectionate son, R. B. Sheridan.

"I beg you will not judge of my attention to the improvement of my hand-writing by this letter, as I am out of the [way] of a better pen."

No apology was required for his handwriting, as it is much better in this letter than in others which were written before and after, and is quite as good as that of his father, while closely resembling it.

Besides corresponding with his friends Halhed and Ker, he occasionally employed himself in versifying on some Bath topic. One of his most successful attempts at rhyming was signed *Asmodeo*, and was entitled, "Clio's Protest, or the Picture Varnished. Addressed to the Honourable Lady Margaret Fordyce." This was an answer to "The Bath Picture: or, a Slight Sketch of its Beauties in 1771," by Mr. Miles Peter Andrews. The latter had written :

"Remark too the dimpling sweet smile,
Lady Marg'ret's fair countenance wears ;
And Lady Ann, whom so beauteous we stile,
As quite free of affected fine airs."

Sheridan's reply runs :—

"But hark—did not our bard repeat
The love-born name of Margaret?
Attention seizes ev'ry ear :
We pant for the description here :—

If ever dulness left thy brow,
Pindar, we say, 'twill leave thee now.
—But O ! old Dulness' son anointed,
His mother never disappointed !—
And here we all are left to seek
A dimple in Fordyce's cheek.

“ And could you really discover,
In gazing those sweet beauties over,
No other charm, no winning grace,
Adorning either mind or face,
But one poor dimple to express
The quintessence of loveliness ?
—Marked you her cheek of rosy hue ?
That eye, in liquid circles moving ;
That cheek abashed at man's approving ;
The one—love's arrows darting round ;
The other blushing for the wound :
Did she not speak—did she not move—
Now Pallas—now the Queen of Love ?”

Some lines having suggested to him a sturdy,
country-bred woman, he gives such a sketch as
Crabbe might have drawn :

“ We see the dame in rustic pride,
A bunch of keys to grace her side,
Stalking across the well swept entry,
To hold her council in the pantry ;
Or with prophetic soul, foretelling
The peas will boil well by the shelling ;
Or bustling in her private closet,
Prepare her lord his morning posset ;
And while the hallowed mixture thickens
Signing death-warrants for the chickens :
Else, gently pensive, poring o'er
Accounts her cook had thumb'd before ;
One eye cast upon that great book
Yclep'd the Family Receipt Book :

By which she's ruled in all her courses,
From stewing figs, to drenching horses.
—Then pans and pickling skillets rise
In dreadful lustre to our eyes,
With store of sweetmeats rang'd in order,
And potted nothings on the border ;
While salves and caudle cups between,
With squalling children, close the scene."

He continues in the same strain with reference to Mrs. Drax, who had been referred to by Mr. Andrews :

"When next then you would shew a pattern
To each untidy married slattern,
Be sure you make a country life
The scene of action for your wife ;—
Choose out a fine old mould'ring hall,
With moral tap'stry on the wall :
A farm-house—be sure you thatch it ;
With barns on t'other side to match it :
A pig-sty and a poultry yard ;
A Shock, you know, the faithful guard :
Describe the nurses, girls and boys,
With all the dear domestic joys ;
And then, with hogs, babes, chicks, and all,
Bring Goody Drax to grace the ball."

Mr. Andrews had sung the praises of Miss Waller as a songstress, and indicated another who was "a mistress of harmony, too," meaning, possibly, Miss Linley. The allusion did not please Sheridan, who wrote :

"O! should your genius ever rise,
To make you Laureate in the skies,
I'd hold my life, in twenty years,
You'd spoil the music of the spheres

—Nay, should the rapture-breathing nine,
In one celestial concert join,
Their sov'reign's power to rehearse,
Were you to furnish them with verse,
By Jove, I'd fly the heav'nly throng,
Tho' Phoebus played, and Linley sung."

The two lines which I italicize are often quoted, though seldom correctly; they occur in the pointed closing advice to Mr. Andrews:

"And first, leave panegyric, pray;
Your genius does not lead that way:
*You write with ease to show your breeding;
But easy writing's vile hard reading.*
—Henceforward Satire guide your pen;
But spare the women—lash the men."

Sheridan made a clever attempt at humorous verse in imitation of Christopher Anstey's "Public Breakfast," in *The New Bath Guide*. He was as skilful a rhymester as Anstey, and quite as acute an observer. The lines attracted general attention when they appeared, and they supply a correct impression of the entertainments which were in vogue during Sheridan's stay at Bath. The subject was a *Ridotto*, given at the opening of the new Assembly Rooms, on the 30th of September, 1771. It is hinted that the aldermen were unaware of the meaning of the Italian word, thinking that it was intended "to exhibit a flaming red otter," and this they thought very wrong; however, their minds were disabused and soothed by an explanation, and the *Ridotto* took place. The story is told by Timothy Screw, one of the waiters, in an epistle to his brother

in London, who is a waiter at Almack's. The curious in such matters may contrast Timothy Screw with the observant Robert, who often sets forth in *Punch* the thoughts of a City waiter :

"At many grand routs in my time I have been
And many fine rooms to be sure I have seen,
Al fresco's, rich galas, ridottos and balls
From Carlisle's sweet palace to black city halls ;
From Almack's long room to the inn at Devizes,
From birth-night *éclat* to the dance at assizes :
All these have I serv'd at these twelve years or more,
Yet faith I've seen here—what I ne'er saw before.

Two rooms were first open'd,—the long and the round one—¹
(These *hogstye* names only serve to confound one)
Both splendidly lit with the new chandeliers
With drops hanging down like the bobs at Peg's ears :
While jewels of paste reflected the rays,
And Bristol-stone diamonds gave strength to the blaze :
So that it was doubtful to view the bright clusters,
Which sent the most light out, the ear-rings or lustres.
And here I must mention the best thing of all,
And what I'm informed ever marks a Bath ball ;
The *Variety* 'tis which so reign'd in the crew,
That turn where one would the classes were new !
For here no dull level of rank and degrees,
No uniform mode that shows all are at ease ;
But like a chess-table, part black and part white,
'Twas a delicate checquer of low and polite !
The motley assemblage so blended together,
'Twas mob or ridotto—'twas both or 'twas neither.

Here tailors, in bags, might contemplate at leisure
Fine dress-coats, for which they'd last week taken measure.

¹ The room in which refreshments were served was an octagon.

Nor less among you was the medley, ye fair !
 I believe there were some beside quality there :
 Miss Spiggot, Miss Brussels, Miss Tape, and Miss Socket,
 Miss Trinket, and aunt, with her leathern pocket ;
 With good Mrs. Soaker, who made her old chin go
 For hours, hob-nobbing with Mrs. Syringo ;
 Had Tib stayed at home, believe none would have missed her ;
 Or pretty Peg Runt, with her tight little sister ;
 But blame not Pinkinny herself for adorning,—
 Her gown—was the gown she had made in the morning ;
 Miss Chain-stitch had ruffles she tore without sorrow,
 'Twas mending-lace day behind counter to-morrow.

But—silence, ye hautboys ! ye fiddles, be dumb !
 Ye dancers, stop instant—*the hour* is come ;
 The great—the all-wonderful hour—of eating !
 That hour, —for which ye all know you've been waiting.
 Well, the doors were unbolted, and in they all rush'd ;
 They crowded, they jostled, they jockey'd, and push'd :
 Thus at a Mayor's feast, a disorderly mob
 Breaks in after dinner to plunder and rob.

If *despatch* is a virtue, I here must aver it,
 The whole congregation had infinite merit ;
 For sure, my dear Hal, you'll be charmed to hear,
 That within half an hour all the tables were clear.
 The rest, Hal, you know is for ever the same,
 With chatt'ring and dancing and all the old game
 Cotillions in one room, country-dance in another,
 In ev'ry room—folly, confusion, and pother ;
 With unmeaning questions, of, ' Which room's the hotter ?
 And, ' Madam, how do you like the *Rudotter* ?
 To see Captain Plume dance—sure none can dislike him—
 Wade's picture,¹ I think, is purdigiously like him—

¹ Wade was master of the ceremonies. Gainsborough had painted his portrait.

Do you dance, sir, to-night ?' 'No, ma'am, I do not.'
'I don't wonder at all, 'tis *suffoking* hot !'"¹

¹ These quotations are made from *The New Foundling Hospital for Wit*, vol. i., pp. 123, 130, and 140, 147. The piece called "The Ridotto of Bath" is not included in the table of contents. It was printed in *The Bath Chronicle* for October, 1771. In the number for the 13th the editor announced : "Verses on Ridotto inserted in our last to be had at the printing office, 1d." Again, on November 8 : "Verses on Ridotto reprinted and to be had in any number." This demonstrates that they were in great demand.

CHAPTER V.

LOVE MAKING AND DUELLING.

THE essays and verse which young Sheridan wrote at Bath in his father's house, possess greater bibliographical interest than literary value. They are clever and readable, and demonstrate the keenness of his observation, the humorous cast of his mind, and that his bent was to cultivate literature; but many an ambitious and ardent youth has written quite as well without afterwards rising from the dead level of cultured mediocrity into the azure heaven of supreme beauty. He wrote with as great ease as any of his contemporaries, but he did not surpass them at the outset. He was regarded as a most pleasant companion. His manners were fascinating, and he was an early proficient in the invaluable art of making friends and keeping them. Even when undistinguished he was generally popular in Bath society. He excited curiosity and gained favour as a genial rhymester; yet he soon emerged from the crowd of agreeable fellows, and then his unfledged originality assumed the wings of the morning and soared into the empyrean.

Without effort or direct purpose he became a

hero of romance, and his name, which had become known in the narrow circle of Bath, grew familiar throughout the land. This premature notoriety is a prime advantage. The battle of life is fought under the easiest conditions and with the best results by him in whose fate the public takes a marked interest. Honours are long withheld from the man who has not had a good start in the race for glory, and who, though personally meritorious, is kept or voluntarily remains in the background. A cloistered virtue receives little credit in a world where those who are most conspicuous are frequently assumed to be the most distinguished.

His elder brother, Charles Francis, was lacking in his ambition and ability. The mercurial temperament, which Sheridan had inherited and is regarded as peculiarly Celtic, was alien to his brother's nature. Charles Francis was a plodding and selfish man, who never ran avoidable risks, who was an unfilial son and an unaffectionate brother, who always kept his eyes fixed on the main chance, but who was yet Celt enough to obtain by plausible address and pertinacity, a lucrative office under Government and a handsome pension on his retirement. His life was commonplace and comfortable, and his death at Tunbridge Wells, on 24th June, 1806, was no loss to the world.¹

¹ Charles Francis Sheridan devoted much time in his later years to discovering perpetual motion. That he did so is a proof that he was cursed with a large measure of the imaginative power which is exhausted in a chase after the impossible. Letters are extant from his younger sister Elizabeth which prove him to have been extremely unkind and unfeeling.

Charles Francis Sheridan fell in love with Miss Linley soon after the Linley and Sheridan families became intimate. He was one of many who could not resist the charms of her person, her voice, and her mind. The earliest of her suitors was a Mr. Wilding, of whom nothing is known but the name. Charles Francis was the most cool and calculating of her lovers. She does not appear to have encouraged him to hope for her hand, and, finding it idle to sigh, he wrote a letter bidding her farewell, which his sister Elizabeth handed to her, and he went to live at a farm-house eight miles distant, consoling himself with the reflection that, even if his addresses had found favour, his dependent and impecunious position would not justify him in marrying.

Halhed was numbered among Miss Linley's adorers. Being passionately fond of music, he naturally delighted in her singing. In a letter to Sheridan he indulged in a rhapsody extracted from a letter written to a friend who was afterwards the famous Orientalist, Sir William Jones, with whom he corresponded in Latin. He adds, with perfect truth, "You see Latin will suffer a man to be foolish, as well as English." Sheridan may have written about rivals, as Halhed proceeds to discuss those who may be entitled to the term:—"Norris, the singer here, *qui est, ut ita dicam, vox et præterea Nihil*, for I own I see no other accomplishment in him. His behaviour I think very low, and his affectation abominable. But the ladies may see with other eyes. . . . As for my friend Watts, he is a gentleman commoner worth

money ; but I need not much fear him. The animal is quite tame, and a very pigeon in gall ; indeed, in Oxford he sleeps away most of his time, and is not very well furnished with that commodity so necessary among the ladies called small talk. I believe Fame has for once spoken truth in saying he admires Miss Linley. But, however, I dare not examine too nicely, whether I am in love with her or no ; were Dessy young enough for me to have serious hopes I am sure I should not, but I am afraid with her the fire of love must change for the gentle glow of friendship which will certainly last with my life."

In his next letter to Sheridan he sent his compliments to Miss Linley, and announced in the succeeding one :—"It is currently reported here [Oxford] that Miss [Linley] is gone to Scotland with a young man of £3,000 per annum : you never saw such long faces as we have here about it, but I fancy it is only Watts's story a little exaggerated." Halhed had probably met her again when he informs Sheridan that :—"I received your packet by the fairest hands that ever inspired a harpsichord with sentiment and feelings." He adds :—"You need not doubt my resolution of visiting King Bladud ; however wavering I might have been, you may guess I am determined by another view of Miss Linley," and that he "had promised the Linleys" to visit Bath, being on terms of personal intimacy with them. His next reference to her is :—"I have just been to hear [Miss Linley] rehearse. I am petrified ; my very faculties are annihilated with wonder. My conception could not form such a power of voice

—such a melody—such a soft yet so audible a tone! O Dick, *ἔρωτα μουνον ηχω*, with Anacreon.” Unlike Sheridan, who had a feeling, but not an ear for music, Halhed was both versed in its principles and passionately fond of it. Thus, in his eyes, Miss Linley was a two-fold goddess. He could not, as he wrote, “get Miss Linley out of his head”; yet his very susceptible heart was smitten with “a very pretty girl” who appeared at the Music-room at Oxford, about whom he had written “a kind of heroico-pastoral poem of fifty lines.” After a visit to London he ends a letter thus:—“Pray don’t forget my compliments, you know where; for a comparison with the London ladies turns out I think much in favour of the Venus de Baiis.”

None of Halhed’s letters contains a reference to the appearance of Miss Linley at the Music Hall in Oxford on the 29th of April, 1771, when, “by desire,” she sang a comic song. A copy has been preserved in the Bodleian Library, and I give it in a note as a curiosity¹ :—

¹ I am indebted to Mr. F. Madan, Sub-Librarian of the Bodleian, for having favoured me with a transcript of this “Comic Song by Miss Linley.”

“Well! Sirs, then I’ll tell you without any jest,
The thing of all things that I hate and detest :
A Coxcomb, a Fop,
A Dainty Milk-sop,
Who’s essenced and dizzened from bottom to top,
Looks just like a Doll for a Milliner’s Shop ;
A thing full of prate,
Of pride and conceit,
All Fashion, no weight,
That shrugs and takes Snuff,
And carries a Muff,
A Minikin, finnikin French powder puff,
And now, Sirs, I fancy I’ve told you enough.”

It has been hastily assumed that Sheridan received the confidences of Halhed while he was Miss Linley's favoured suitor, and concealed this from his friend.¹ The truth is she was the frequent theme of the letters which they interchanged, and Sheridan was often the vehicle for conveying messages from Halhed to Miss Linley. The following letter, which was written in reply to one announcing Halhed's approaching departure for India, appears to have contained a message in Miss Linley's own handwriting; but it does not necessarily follow, as has been asserted, that Sheridan acknowledged he was her accepted lover. A phrase of Halhed's is worth pondering before the perusal of what I shall quote: "The effusions of passion are never very entertaining to a third person," nor, it may be added, always intelligible. The letter in question is dated the 29th of July, 1771:—"I did not know the situation of my own heart, till I received your letter; but the sight of a signature from a hand on which I could have wished to breathe out my soul, and some thought of the little care I took to express the peculiarity of my sensations when I had it in my power at Oxford, have put me in a situation very difficult to express. You should not have ripped up a wound which was not so much as skinned over, it was inhuman; and although the Bath post-mark would at any time have made my heart flutter like a frightened bullfinch in his cage, yet if your letter had in the inside discoursed wholly on other topics, there might be some chance that I should waive

¹ Moore's "Memoirs" of Sheridan, vol. i., pp. 48, 49, 50.

the melancholy reflections that now assault me. But your present epistle has unmanned me. By Heaven! it has almost put a period to my very functions, and I cannot see, speak, write, or think as I used to do, or as I ought to do.

“O Dick, there are certain things (I perceive it too late) that attack me most forcibly on the thought of quitting my native country. I once hoped that my sensations would be few, and my pangs trivial. But they already overcome me merely by anticipation. What will be the consequence of them when the time, that fatal time comes, it is impossible for me to imagine. As for seeing you, Dick, which I most ardently wish, I cannot at present answer how far it may be in my power; for my father is of opinion that every moment between this and my departure will be little enough for the purpose of qualifying myself for another life; but if there is an instant when the God of Love and Friendship smiles on unhappy mortals, I will watch it with a phrenetic impatience, and haste on the wings of ardour to Bath. As for Miss Linley, of whom I dare not think but as of a divinity, if I could in any language, by any study, find out expressions suitable to the sense I have of her favour and condescension, I should think my labour most happily bestowed to convince her of the obligations I owe her most flattering distinction, and to return her my thanks for the health and happiness she so kindly wishes me.

“Alas! Dick, that she should be the goal of that happiness, and that in the pursuit of wealth—which

is *worldly happiness*—I should every day get an irrecoverable step further from the only felicity of which my heart is capable. But thus it is that our minds are the sports of empty desires and unwarrantable designs. However, as far as delicacy will permit, I would wish you to go, in presenting my acknowledgments for her undeserved commendation, and my wishes that her happiness may meet her in as precipitate a manner as I am obliged to fly from it; and use, Dick, your own eloquence on this occasion, for I well know the insufficiency of my own; and perhaps she may be inclined to yield attention to the readiness of your thoughts when the stale and trite method of my sentiments might have inspired her with no other ideas than those of contempt and disgust.”

What has just been quoted is but a half of the letter from Halhed, which has been construed as demonstrating he had learned that Sheridan was the “chosen favourite” of Miss Linley. The impassioned phrases in it are very unlike what a lover would write to a successful rival, even if that rival were his dearest friend. The last sentence either contains an appeal for Sheridan’s aid on his behalf, or else a suggestion that Sheridan should urge his own suit. The most probable explanation is that, when Halhed received an appointment in India, he wrote asking his friend to convey the news to Miss Linley, whom he loved, but to whom he had not declared his passion. Her reply, which was enclosed in Sheridan’s letter, appears to have contained good wishes for his happiness, but no regrets for his

departure. On reading these words, he may have realized both the depth of his own feelings and the futility of indulging in them. At the same time, he may have thought that, if Sheridan used his "eloquence" to represent to Miss Linley what he felt, she might be softened and abandon her attitude of calm friendship. The alternative which might seem the least distasteful would be for Sheridan to succeed where he had failed.

The following passage in the same letter bears out my interpretation:—"In regard to India my fate is positively determined, and I think that there is but one person's commands that could hinder me: by that you know I may mean my father, and perhaps I may mean —. But perhaps, Dick, the only reason and the only person in the world that could have the least influence in causing my stay, may have an equal share of power over and more *participation* with your destiny. If so, Dick, I envy you more than I can express, and shall envy you, if I come to have mountains of gold at my disposal. As for my fine parts, and those other fine things you so liberally bestow on me, pray what service do they afford me? I have been a very miserable creature, and in all probability am doomed to more misery than any I have yet felt. The only thing I can possibly induce myself to believe I possess is sensibility; and in such a situation as mine, when it has Eliza [Linley] for its object, ought I to look upon it as a blessing? Can I but think it an aggravation (and a most dreadful one) to my calamities? But I believe, Dick, however fortunately you may

be situated in the meridian sunshine of all that is worth thinking of in this world, that you still have humanity enough to sympathize with the torments of absence, and good nature enough to pity them ; χαλεπωτατον δε παντων αποτυγχανει φιλονυκτα. Adieu, Dick, I shall but scribble another sheet of unintelligible rhapsody if I continue writing. The effusions of passion are never very entertaining to a third person."

Ten weeks after Halhed had penned the foregoing words, he wrote: "Those letters you mention have not, and I conclude never will come to my hands; perhaps they may be lost altogether; but, however, be they where they will, I have never seen them; and I would rather have lost all the letters I ever received in my life than a tittle of those concerning the *tenth muse*. It is very hard that but one of yours which came to hand should contain a word of consolation or satisfaction on this head, and that those which are lost should be so full of the most enchanting intelligence; pray resume that topic, for it is by no means threadbare." In a postscript he writes:—"There is but one sort of *Bath News* which it concerns me to hear." It is hardly necessary to repeat that, if Sheridan had informed Halhed on the 29th of July, 1771, as it has been hastily assumed he did, of being on the footing of Miss Linley's favoured lover, it is very improbable Halhed would have written on the 14th of October in that year in the foregoing terms. The last letter from Halhed to Sheridan was penned a week before he sailed for India early in December, 1771; it begins:

"By the greatest accident in the world I received your intelligible epistle, but I cannot answer it so fully as I could wish, because I have kept my bed some days, as I still continue to do, and that likewise is a sufficing reason for my not coming to Bath, as you advise, and as I should be very happy to do."

After giving directions where to send a letter, he continues:—"As you know my heart, I shall not explain my sentiments upon some part of your letter, where you mention the resolutions of St. Cæcilia, etc., especially as it is some pain and some inconvenience to me to write in bed. But as for Mrs. Pleydell, whom I think I recollect, she will never move the settled purpose of my soul, you may depend upon it. Pray send up the letter as soon as possible, and apologize, both with yourself and St. C[æcilia], for my inability of writing, etc. In about a month or five weeks I shall be at Madeira, and from thence I will write to you, as I will from all other parts." These passages, like the others, do not justify the inference that Halhed knew he had been supplanted by Sheridan in Miss Linley's affections, and was filled with resentment. She herself was not in a marrying mood; her objections to matrimony resembling those of many a girl who, at the age of seventeen, declares her intention of remaining single and her own mistress. Doubtless, the advice was most unwelcome which Sheridan gave to Halhed with regard to Mrs. Pleydell, of whom I know nothing. He, too, may have felt at the moment that he could never be comforted for the



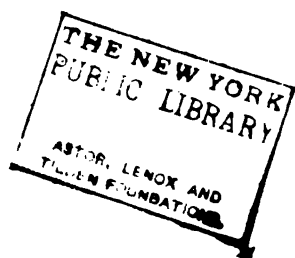
W. & A. B. & C. 1777

Nathaniel Brassey Halhed.

Born 1751 — Died 1830.

From a painting made in 1771

—



loss of his heart's idol. He remained a bachelor longer than Miss Linley remained a spinster, as thirteen years elapsed after the date of this letter before he was married to Helena Ribaut, the daughter of the Dutch Governor of Chinsura.¹

Miss Linley was as much tormented by suitors as Penelope. One among them was specially obnoxious, and his attentions were encouraged and sanctioned by her parents. His name was Long. He was

¹ The mistake made by Moore as to the relation between Halhed and Miss Linley has been repeated by others, the writer of Halhed's life in *The Dictionary of Biography* being one of them. Before passing from his letters, I shall give a final extract to exemplify his facility as a versifier, the passage beginning with a line that Sheridan effectively used afterwards in a slightly altered form: "A dwarf elegy on a lady of a middle age. Remember this is merely a *trite jingle* to put the old folks in good humour, and is the produce of a restless hour in bed."

"Dry be that tear: be hushed that
struggling sigh!
Can grief revive whom Heaven ordains
to die?
True she is gone—but say, can *merit*
save
Devoted mortals from th' all-grasping
grave;
Can virtue cool the fever's boiling rage
Or stop the inexorable hand of age?
No—but to sink so early to the tomb,
While youth yet lent the glowing
cheek its bloom
While vigour still did every nerve
supply,
Beat in the pulse, and sparkled in
the eye;
While still the mind possess'd its
native fire,
Strong all its functions, all its powers
entire—

'Tis that which aggravates the deadly
blow;
'Tis that adds double poignancy to
woe.
But not to reason's sober eye appears
The true foundation for unceasing
cares;
'Tis not for years (that regularly span
Time's fleeting course) to sum the
life of man;
That space (if well employed) we
should define
By rules more weighty and a nobler
line.
Actions, and those alone can truly
date
The period of our fluctuating fate;
The test of merit, and of life the
test;
For *they've* lived *longest*, who have
lived the *best*."

very rich and old. His wooing was the talk of Bath, and his conduct excited laughter in London.

Samuel Foote was in Bath when a match between Mr. Long and Miss Linley was thought to have been settled. He used the topic in a characteristic fashion. A comedy of which it was the subject was written by him, and entitled *The Maid of Bath*; it was performed at his theatre in the Haymarket, and Garrick wrote the Prologue and Cumberland the Epilogue. The first representation took place on the 26th of June, 1771.

The personage meant to represent Mr. Long was named Flint, and this was Foote's part. In the play Miss Linley bears the name of Miss Linnet. Major Rackett was understood at the time to be Captain or Major Mathews. Personality made the piece objectionable as a work of good literature, and attractive to those who rejoice in the misfortunes of their neighbours. Moreover, it may be said, as Bacon did of a lie, that a mixture of personality on the stage, in the Press and in Parliament, "doth ever add pleasure." Major Rackett is depicted as having designs upon Miss Linnet, and Flint as being determined to make her his wife. Major Rackett, who had just arrived at Bath, asks Sir Christopher Cripple the news:—

"RACKETT. What is become of my little flame, *La petite Rosignole*, the lively little Linnet? Is she still——

"SIR CHRISTOPHER. Lost, totally lost!

"RACKETT. Lost! what, left you? I am sorry for that.

"SIR CHRISTOPHER. Worse, worse!

"RACKETT. I hope she ain't dead.

"SIR CHRISTOPHER. Ten thousand times worse than all that !

"RACKETT. How the deuce can that be ?

"SIR CHRISTOPHER. Just going to be buried alive—to be married.

"RACKETT. Pho ! Is that all ? The ceremony was, indeed, formerly looked upon as a kind of metaphysical grave ; but the system is changed, and marriage is now considered as an entrance to a new and better kind of life.

"SIR CHRISTOPHER. Indeed !

"RACKETT. Pshaw ! Who talks now of the drudgery of domestic duties, of nuptial chains, and of bonds ? Mere obsolete words ! They did well enough in the dull days of Queen Bess ; but a modern lass puts on fetters to enjoy the more freedom, and pledges her faith to one, that she may be at liberty to bestow her favours on all.

"SIR CHRISTOPHER. What vast improvements are daily made in our morals ! What an unfortunate dog am I, to come into the world at least half a century too soon ! What would I give to be born twenty years hence ! There will be damned fine doings then ! hey, Tom ? But I'm afraid our poor little girl won't have it in her power to profit by these prodigious improvements.

"RACKETT. Why not ?

"SIR CHRISTOPHER. Oh, when you once hear the name of her partner——

"RACKETT. Who is it ?

"SIR CHRISTOPHER. An acquaintance of yours : only that old fusty, shabby, shuffling, money-loving, water-drinking, milk-marring amorous old hunks, Mr. Solomon Flint.

"RACKETT. He that enjoys—owns, I mean—half the farms in the country ?

"SIR CHRISTOPHER. He, even he."

Sir Christopher and his associates agree to dissuade Flint from marrying, and, while they are planning their course of action, Miss Linnet converses with her mother, by whom she is urged to agree to the match :—

"MRS. LINNET. Yes, Kitty, it is in vain to deny it! I am convinced there is some little, low, paltry passion, that lurks in your heart.

"MISS LINNET. Indeed, my dear mother, you wrong me.

"MRS. LINNET. Indeed, my dear Miss, but I don't! What else could induce you to reject the addresses of a lover like this? Ten thousand pounds a year! Gad's my life, there is not a lady in Town would refuse him, let her rank be ever so——

"MISS LINNET. Not his fortune, I firmly believe.

"MRS. LINNET. Well, and who nowadays marries anything else? Would you refuse an estate, because it happened to be a little encumbered? You must consider the man in this case as a kind of mortgage.

"MISS LINNET. But the disproportion of years——

"MRS. LINNET. In your favour, child; the encumbrance will be the sooner removed."

Lady Catherine Coldstream calls, and joins Mrs. Linnet in urging her daughter to accept the old rich man, alleging that she had done likewise in her youth, and that "love is a pastime for boys and green girls, all stuff, fit for nothing but novels and romances." Miss Linnet submits. Flint calls upon her, expatiates upon the delights of a country life, and, on her remarking that the time must now and then pass very slowly, he exclaims:—

"FLINT. What, in the country, my dear Miss? not a minute: you will find all pastime and jollity there; for what with minding the dairy, dunning the tenants, preserving and pickling, nursing the children, scolding the servants, mending and making, roasting, boiling, and baking, you won't have a moment to spare; you will be merry and happy as the days they are long."

Flint spends the evening with Sir Christopher and others, who work upon his avarice and his fears till he decides, in his own mind, that he would be a

fool if he married. Being reluctant either to marry or part from Miss Linnet, he makes an insulting proposal which she scornfully rejects. The others enter the room, and upbraid him for his conduct, Lady Catherine Coldstream remarking that Mr. Foote should pillory him on the stage, and Sir Christopher adding :—

“And expose him to the contempt of the world ; he richly deserves it.

“FLINT. Ay, he may write, you may rail and the people may hiss, and what care I ? I have that at home that will keep up my spirits.

“LADY CATHERINE. At home ?

“RACKETT. The wretch means money.

“FLINT. And what better friend can any man have ? Tell me the place where its influence fails ? Ask that gentleman how he got his cockade ? Money ! I know its worth, and therefore cannot too carefully keep it ; at this very instant I have a proof of its value ; it enables me to laugh at that squeamish impertinent girl, and despise the weak efforts of your impotent malice : call me forth to your courts when you please ; that will procure me able defenders, and good witnesses too, if they are wanted.”

The play ends by Major Rackett suing for Miss Linnet's hand and being rejected, because he had ill-used her acquaintance, Miss Price, and by Miss Linnet announcing that she does not desire or intend to change her station or condition.

As Mr. Long's version of what occurred between him and Miss Linley is not forthcoming, he may get the benefit of any doubt which can exist. A clear and minute narrative of what occurred at Bath and elsewhere between or concerning Sheridan, Mr. Long, Captain Mathews and Miss Linley and her parents was prepared by Elizabeth Sheridan after

she had become the wife of Mr. Henry Lefanu, and her manuscript is now before me. She was the eyewitness of much that she narrates and she had personal knowledge of the personages she names. I shall reproduce the greater part of what she wrote, interspersing explanations where they may be necessary¹ :—" At that period Miss Linley was addressed by Mr. Long, a gentleman of very large fortune and then sixty years of age. Her family considering this as a most splendid establishment, and Mr. Linley giving up all idea of the loss he must sustain from being deprived of the benefit of her professional talents, was urgent with her to accept Mr. Long's offer. Diamonds were presented, wedding-clothes prepared, settlements drawn up, etc., when suddenly the match was broke off.

" The blame fell on Mr. Long, and many persons

¹ Moore had the manuscript before him; but he gave the substance of it only, with interpolations of his own. The opening sentences of Mrs. Henry Lefanu's narrative run : " Mr. Sheridan went to Bath at the latter end of the year 1770. He had some years previous to that period rendered some service to Mr. Linley, at that time in very narrow circumstances, who took an early opportunity of inviting Mr. Sheridan's family and some of their friends to a small musical party at his house. This was the first introduction of Mr. R. B. Sheridan to Miss Linley. She then was principal singer at the Bath Concert, though not more than sixteen years of age. The young people were all much pleased with each other, but the elder Mr. Sheridan, who had never introduced his daughters before to any person in public life, desired his elder daughter, then about Miss Linley's age, not to cultivate too great an intimacy, though he permitted the acquaintance to go on. Charles Sheridan became strongly attached to Miss Linley; his brother was apparently entirely engaged in the amusements of the place."

actually dropt all intercourse with him in consequence of what appeared such ungenerous conduct to the young lady. Mr. Linley immediately declared his intention of prosecuting Mr. Long for breach of contract on the ground of the loss he had sustained by Miss Linley being obliged to give up all her professional engagements during the time she received Mr. Long's addresses. She in the meantime was sinking under severe indisposition brought on by anxiety for the steps her father was taking, as she feared, in the event of the matter coming to trial, that Mr. Long would give up a letter she had written to him declaring her reluctance to the proposed match on the ground of her attachment to another, and requesting he would withdraw his suit in order to shield her from her father's displeasure ; but she was relieved from this distress by Mr. Long voluntarily giving Mr. Linley three thousand pounds to be lodged in the hands of trustees for the use of his daughter, and who also insisted on her acceptance of jewels to the amount of a thousand pounds, and other valuable presents which had been sent to her at the time of the intended marriage. After this Miss Linley continued to follow her profession according to the engagements made by her father, to whom she was bound till the age of 21."

After stating that the first Marquess of Buckingham, then Mr. Grenville, came to Bath from Oxford in 1771 to take lessons from Mr. Thomas Sheridan in elocution, and that at the close of the summer in that year Mr. Sheridan went to Dublin, Mrs. Henry

Lefanu continues :—" His family were left to their own guidance. The eldest son not twenty, the eldest daughter just seventeen and the youngest some years younger. Both brothers were too partial to Miss Linley to make it possible for their sister to avoid her, had she inclined to do so ; but the fact was her captivating manners engaged the affection of both the sisters as well as the brothers.

" Charles being of a more serious turn than his brother, reflecting on the risk of his father's displeasure and his own inability to support a wife, determined to leave Bath for a time as he found he could not conquer his attachment while he had daily opportunities of seeing Miss Linley. He took a formal leave of her, which his youngest sister delivered. Richard Sheridan's attentions to her were not supposed to have any serious object. However, he soon after entrusted his eldest sister with the real state of his sentiments towards Miss Linley, and informed her of that young lady's being in great distress on account of the persecutions of Major Mathews, who, taking advantage of a degree of countenance which, when almost a child, she had shown his attentions, now threatened sometimes to destroy himself, at others to injure her character to the utmost of his power, if she persisted in refusing to listen to his addresses."

Few authentic particulars about Mathews are preserved. He is said to have been rich and married, to have had an estate in Wales, and to have lived in Bath in the character of a gay bachelor. It is certain that he was the author of a treatise on Whist which passed

through many editions, and according to tradition he was "the finest player of his day."¹ Less creditable is the circumstance that he tormented and terrified the gentle Miss Linley with obnoxious and ungentlemanly addresses. She was afraid to confide to her parents the misery which burdened her mind, but she disclosed her secret grief to Alicia and Elizabeth Sheridan, and they informed their younger brother of her woes, thinking that one so handsome, clever and bold had been designed by Nature to act the part of a knight of the olden time. The character of their brother given to Miss Linley appears to have impressed her so greatly that, as Mrs. Lefanu writes, fearing the violence of her father's temper, she "was at length induced to consult Richard Sheridan, whose intimacy with Major Mathews at the time, she thought, might warrant his interference. Her father, she was certain, would at the risk of ruin to himself and his family have called the Major to account, if she ventured to consult him. R. B. Sheridan sounded Mathews on the subject, and at length prevailed on him to give up the pursuit.

"Miss Linley, now completely disgusted with a profession she never liked, conceived the idea of retiring to a Convent in France till she came of age, meaning to indemnify her father by giving up a part of the money settled upon her by Long. She advised with her young friend Sheridan on the subject, and he communicated the scheme to his elder sister, who, thinking it meritorious to assist a young person

¹ For information about Mathews and Whist see Mr. W. P. Courtney's very interesting work on "English Whist," pp. 366-370.

situated as Miss Linley was in getting out of the difficulties that surrounded her, offered to give her letters of introduction to some ladies she had known in France, where she had resided some years, and Sheridan offered to be her conductor to St. Quentin, where these friends lived. The arranging the whole plan of course produced frequent meetings between the young couple, and tho' Sheridan was then strongly attached to Miss Linley, he claimed only the title of friend, and his sister had no idea that the projected excursion was to lead to an immediate marriage.

"At length they fixed on an evening when Mr. Linley, his eldest son and Miss M[ary] Linley were engaged at the Concert (Miss Linley being excused on the plea of illness) to set out on their journey. Sheridan brought a sedan-chair to Mr. Linley's house in the Crescent, in which he had Miss Linley conveyed to a post-chaise that was waiting for them on the London Road. A woman was in the chaise who had been hired by Sheridan to accompany them on this extraordinary elopement. They reached London early the next day, when Sheridan introduced Miss Linley to a friend and relation [Mr. Ewart], then in Town, as an Heiress who had consented to be united to him in France. Another friend, the son of a respectable brandy-merchant in the City, suggested the idea of their sailing from the Port of London to Dunkirk, to which place his father had a vessel ready to sail immediately. This plan, as making a pursuit more difficult, was immediately adopted, and the old gentleman not being

entirely let into the secret accompanied the young couple on board his ship, recommending them to the care of the Captain as if they had been his own children. He gave them letters of introduction to his correspondent at Dunkirk, and they were from thence given recommendations to several persons at Lille.¹

"After quitting Dunkirk, Mr. Sheridan was more explicit with Miss Linley as to his views in accompanying her to France. He told her he could not be content to leave her in a Convent unless she consented to a previous marriage, which had all along been the object of his hopes, and she must be

¹ Another version of the trip to Dunkirk, which Mr. Percy Fitzgerald quotes, at p. 93 of the first volume of his "Lives of the Sheridans," is circumstantial and untrue. According to it, Miss Linley and Sheridan took a boat from the Thames to Dunkirk, which was driven into Margate by stress of weather, and Cooley, the boatman, went off the next morning with other persons, by whom he was offered higher terms. The writer of this nonsense evidently supposed it to be easy and customary to row across the Channel to Dunkirk. He bolstered up his stupid story by producing two epigrams as stupid as it, which he alleged had been pencilled on the chimney-piece of an inn at Margate; the first, he attributed to Miss Linley:—

"The sea was once the halcyon's nest,
The winds, the zephyrs playing round its breast.
O! why then now so faithless and unruly!
Alas! 'tis plain; they're intimates of Cooley."

The second and more discreditable of the two is fathered upon Sheridan:—

"When Christ once hired a boat to cross the sea,
O! Cooley, had that boat been hired of thee,
Had Satan offered but a sixpence more,
Our blessed Lord had sure been left on shore."

The Morning Post, 10 September, 1787.

aware that, after the step she had taken, she could not appear in England but as his wife. Miss Linley, who really preferred him greatly to any person, was not difficult to persuade, and at a village not far from Calais the marriage ceremony was performed by a priest who was known to be often employed on such occasions.¹

"They then proceeded to Lille, where Miss Linley determined to stop in preference of proceeding to St. Quentin. She immediately secured an apartment in a Convent, where it was settled she was to remain either till Sheridan came of age or till he was in a situation to support a wife. He remained a few days at Lille to be satisfied that she was settled to her satisfaction ; but, whether from agitation of mind or fatigue, she was taken ill, and an English physician, Dr. Dolman of York, was called in to attend

¹ Moore, who had read the manuscript now before me, and found it "so hard," as he wrote, "to narrate familiar events eloquently," thought to improve upon Mrs. Henry Lefanu's simple prose in this fashion :—"On their leaving Dunkirk, as was natural to expect, the chivalrous and disinterested protector degenerated into a mere selfish lover. It was represented by him, with arguments which seemed to appeal to prudence as well as feeling, that, after the step which they had taken, she could not possibly appear in England again but as his wife. He was therefore, he said, resolved not to deposit her in a Convent, till she had consented, by the ceremony of a marriage, to confirm to him that right of protecting her, which he had now but temporarily assumed. It did not, we may suppose, require much eloquence to convince her heart of the truth of this reasoning ; and, accordingly, at a little village, not far from Calais, they were married about the latter end of March, 1772, by a priest well known for his services on such occasions" (Moore's "Memoirs" of Sheridan, vol. i., p. 67).

her. From what he perceived of her case he wished to have her more immediately under his care than he could in the Convent, and he and Mrs. Dolman most kindly invited her to their house."

The following short note from Dr. Dolman to Sheridan, which his sister may not have seen, is addressed to "Monsieur Sherridan, Gentilhomme Anglois, à l'Hôtel de Bourbon, sur la Grande Place":—"Dear Sir, it will not be improper to give one of the powders in a glass of white wine twice a day—morning and evening. Don't wait supper for me because my time is not my own. Compliments and wishes of health to your lady. I remain.—R. D." "I have sent the recipe to the apothecary."

On the day Dr. Dolman sent this note, being the 15th of April, 1772, Sheridan addressed the following letter to his brother at Bath:—"Dear Brother, Most probably you will have thought me very excusable for not having writ to you.¹ You will be surprised, too, to be told that, except your letter just after we arrived, we have never received one line from Bath. We suppose for certain that there are letters somewhere, in which case we shall have sent to every place almost but the right, whither, I hope, I have now sent also. You will soon see me in England.

"Everything on our side has at last succeeded.

¹ Sheridan's friend, Halhed, told him in one of his last letters:—"I find you are very apt to make this kind of mistake in your writing; for instance, you say, 'I have writ,' instead of 'I have written.' I make no manner of doubt that it is owing to carelessness."

Miss Linley is now fixing in a Convent, where she has been entered some time. This has been a much more difficult point than you could have imagined, and we have, I find, been extremely fortunate. She has been ill, but is now recovered; this, too, has delayed me. We would have wrote, but have been kept in the most tormenting expectation, from day to day, of receiving your letters; but, as everything is now so happily settled here, I will delay no longer giving you that information, though probably I shall set out for England without knowing a syllable of what has happened with you.

"All is well, I hope; and I hope, too, that though you may have been ignorant for some time of our proceedings, you could never have been uneasy lest anything should tempt me to depart, even in a thought, from the honour and consistency which engaged me at first. I wrote to Mathews above a week ago, which I think was necessary and right. I hope he has acted the one proper part that was left him; and to speak from my *feelings*, I cannot but say that I shall be very happy to find no further disagreeable consequence pursuing him; for, what Brutus says of Cæsar, etc.—if I delay one moment longer I lose the post.

"I have writ now to Mr. Adams, and should apologize to you for having writ to him first, and lost my time for you. Love to my sisters, Miss L. to all. Ever, Charles, your affec^d Brother, R. B. Sheridan.

"I need not tell you that we altered quite our route."

As letters had been sent to Bath from Lille, Mr.

Linley could not be ignorant where his daughter was to be found, despite any alteration made in the route taken by Sheridan and herself. Mr. Linley arrived at Lille a few days after the letter from Sheridan had been despatched to his brother. What passed between him and the fugitives must be left to conjecture, as Mrs. Henry Lefanu has failed to satisfy curiosity. Her narrative thus continues: "After some private conversation with Mr. Sheridan, he [Mr. Linley] appeared quite reconciled to his daughter, but insisted on her returning to England with him to fulfil several engagements he had entered into on her account. The whole party set out together the next day, Mr. Linley having previously promised to allow his daughter to return to Lille when her engagements were over."

Mrs. Henry Lefanu next reverts to Bath, and describes what happened after Miss Linley's flight; but, before proceeding with her narrative, I shall give an unpublished letter to Sheridan from W. B.; probably William Brereton, a friend of the Linley and Sheridan families, wherein the conduct of Mathews is set forth with precision. It is dated the 22nd of March, 1772: "Sir, The few lines you was pleased to send me, gave me infinite satisfaction. The part you have thought proper to take in this affair I cannot sufficiently commend, and I rejoice most sincerely that Miss Linley has a prospect of enjoying a calm peace of mind. Be pleased to make my best compliments to the dear girl, and let her know that my endeavours and any assistance in my power shall never be wanting to make her easy and happy.

“The morning after you left Bath, Mathews came to me and has repeated his visits several times. It is impossible to give an account of his conversation, it consisted of many dreadful oaths and curses upon himself and his past life, but in my opinion they were little to the purpose. I am afraid his present situation and feelings are not to be envied. But bad as he is, the town has so little charity for him, that they make [him] worse perhaps than he deserves. I carried two messages from him to Mr. Linley, but he would not hearken to a word about him. He said he had been deceived once and he never would trust him more, since that he has heard so many reports to his prejudice that their meeting may be of bad consequence, and I shall endeavour by all means to prevent it. In my last conversation with Mr. Mathews I ventured to affirm that he had nothing now to do but to settle his affairs and leave Bath with a resolution never to return again. This scheme (if anything he says can be depended upon) he solemnly promised should be immediately put in execution. After which, I know Mr. Linley’s plan is to get his daughter to return to Bath, in order to put an end to the many wicked suggestions, which the malice of his enemies have propagated, and Betsy may expect soon to be persuaded to take this step by letter, or, perhaps, by Mr. Linley in person. I can [write] no more, the post is going out. I wish you success in your undertaking. Write as soon as you can. Yours most sincerely, etc., W. B.”

Mrs. Henry Lefanu states that, “at the time of the elopement, Charles Sheridan was in the retire-

ment he had chosen. The landlord of the house then rented by Mr. Sheridan, thinking that the young ladies were left in a very unprotected and disagreeable situation, set off at break of day to apprise their brother of what had happened. Charles Sheridan, who was entirely ignorant of the attachment of his brother to Miss Linley, was violently agitated at the intelligence, conceiving himself to have been deceived by both parties.

“He hastened to Bath, and on his arrival found Mr. Mathews at the house, endeavouring to get news of the fugitives. Charles Sheridan unguardedly dropped some expressions of displeasure at his brother’s conduct, which the man treasured up. He was outrageous at having been induced by R. B. S. to give up his pursuit of Miss L——, and though he had been married many years, made no scruple of avowing his passion and his hopes of success but for the intervention of her young friend.”

During the absence of Miss Linley and Sheridan this incomprehensible man continued to plague the Sheridan family with his visits and inquiries. Being dissatisfied with what he heard, he caused the following announcement to be inserted in *The Bath Chronicle*, which is dated Wednesday, the 8th of April, 1772 :—“Mr. Richard S[heridan] having attempted, in a letter left behind him for that purpose, to account for his scandalous method of running away from this place, by insinuations derogating from my character, and that of a young lady, innocent as far as relates to me, or my knowledge, since which he has neither taken any notice of

letters, or even informed his own family of the place where he has hid himself; I cannot longer think he deserves the treatment of a gentleman, than in this public method, to post him as a L[iar], and a treacherous S[coundrel].

“And as I am convinced there have been many malevolent incendiaries concerned in the propagation of this infamous lie, if any of them, unprotected by *age, infirmities*, or profession, will dare to acknowledge the part they have acted, and affirm *to* what they have said *of* me, they may depend on receiving the proper reward of their villainy, in the most public manner. The world will be candid enough to judge properly (I make no doubt) of any private abuse on this subject for the future; as nobody can defend himself from an accusation he is ignorant of. Thomas Mathews.”¹

This announcement was alike comical and absurd. Mathews arrogated to himself the right of debauching Miss Linley, and he treated as an enemy the young man who had thwarted him. If Mathews had been blessed with judicious friends, they would have taken steps to determine whether he were in his right mind. Apparently, however, nothing worse was thought of Mathews by most of his contemporaries than that he had acted somewhat rashly and in very bad taste.

Mrs. Henry Lefanu rightly states that Mathews's letter “was worded in the most insulting terms,”

¹ It is probable that the letter which Sheridan says, in one to his brother, he had written to Mathews did not reach him before he put forth the above challenge.

and she adds : " Miss Sheridan called him to severe account for this step, when he had the insolence and baseness to assert that her brother Charles was privy to what he had done. On speaking to him on the subject he was greatly shocked, for, however displeased with his brother, he was incapable of countenancing such conduct, and nothing but Mr. Mathews quitting Bath at the time prevented his taking up the matter in a very serious manner.

" On the arrival of the party from the Continent, R. Sheridan found Mathews was in London, and, as an old school-fellow had mentioned to him the affair of the Bath advertisement, he left Miss Linley under her father's care at a hotel, and providing himself with pistols, he proceeded to the house where Mathews lodged. That gentleman appeared much surprised at seeing him, and not a little alarmed at the prospect of his visit, the more so as one of the pistols peeped out of his pocket."

Mrs. Henry Lefanu wrote in perfect good faith, and her statement of facts is at once lucid and conclusive. With regard to opinions or conjectures, her testimony cannot have any special weight with a competent critic. Mathews may have been taken aback when Sheridan appeared, but it is in accordance with probability that he expected a hostile meeting to follow as a matter of course. The sight of the pistols would have alarmed Sheridan's sisters ; but Mathews must have been prepared for it, and he would have been strangely ignorant of the world in which he lived if he had deemed it unusual.

She continues :—" As he found Sheridan had not

seen the offensive paper, he assured him the matter was quite misrepresented, that the advertisement was nothing more than an inquiry about him, put in with the sanction of his family; called him his dear friend, and one he should be particularly unhappy to have any difference with. On this they parted, and Mr. Linley, his daughter and R. B. Sheridan proceeded to Bath.

“His first step was to get one of the newspapers from Crutwell, the printer [and proprietor of the *Bath Chronicle*], and then coming home he questioned his Brother as to his knowledge of the transaction, a charge from which he found no difficulty of clearing himself; but, as he really was vexed at the elopement, some hasty words escaped him which were overheard. However, the family spent the evening amicably together, and after the young ladies retired for the night, the two Brothers set off Post for London to have an explanation with Mr. Mathews.

“The following day when they did not appear their sisters were much alarmed and their distress was heightened by being told that high words had been heard between them and that it was supposed a duel between the brothers would be the consequence. Though they did not credit this report, yet they feared some danger to their Brothers and Miss Sheridan proposed calling on Miss Linley as the person most likely to be informed of her brother's intentions, but that young lady did not know of their having left Bath and was completely overcome with distress at being considered the

cause of so much misery. Repeated fainting fits obliged her Father to call in medical aid and Miss Sheridan was nearly in the same situation. A very remarkable person happened to be present at this scene; the late Dr. Priestley, who lodged at Mr. Linley's at the time. At length when they were a little recovered Mr. Linley put Miss Sheridan into a [sedan] chair and taking her sister, [the writer of this narrative], by the hand conducted them to the melancholy home.¹

"This passed on Sunday night. Until the Tuesday evening following there were [no] tidings of the young gentlemen when they entered much fatigued, never having been in bed from the time they left Bath. Richard handed to his sister Mr. Mathews' well-known apology which was immediately sent to Crutwell for insertion" [in the *Bath Chronicle*].

¹ A spurious narrative of the above-mentioned occurrences is contained in a letter, purporting to be written by Miss Linley and dated the 2nd of May, 1771, which was published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for October, 1825. In a review, which I have Mr. John Murray's authority for stating was written by Lockhart and which appeared in *The Quarterly* the following year, Moore was taken to task for not printing or referring to this letter, which he had not seen till after his work was published and the Hon. Caroline Norton, the grand-daughter of Sheridan, stigmatized as a "foolish forgery," in *Macmillan's Magazine* for January, 1861. Several writers have accepted as trustworthy the fiction contained in this letter, from an "Octogenarian," who compiled much rubbish about Sheridan, down to Mrs. Oliphant, who wrote about him with unaccountable and unpardonable prejudice. The "Story of the Forgery" which I told in No. 3509 of *The Athenæum*, is reprinted in the Appendix to this volume.

The apology, of which the original is before me, is in these terms:—"Being convinced that the expressions I made use of to Mr. Sheridan's disadvantage were the effects of passion and misrepresentation, I intreat [retract?] what I have said to that gentleman's disadvantage, and particularly beg his pardon for my advertisement in the *Bath Chronicle*. Th: Mathews."

"On their arrival in Town they had driven to the lodgings of Mr. William Brereton, from whom a message was despatched to Mr. Mathews to desire a meeting and to fix the time. I think that swords should be the weapons was settled by Mr. Mathews. Mr. Brereton¹ was second to Sheridan and Mr. Mathews was accompanied by his uncle, a Captain Knight. Mr. Smith, a friend and relation of Mr. Sheridan, went to the Tavern where they met, as surgeon. Mr. C. Sheridan was compelled to remain at Mr. Brereton's lodgings till the event of the meeting should be known. . . . After a few passes Sheridan disarmed Mathews, and having taken possession of his sword desired he would sign an apology for what he had published. While he was speaking Captain Knight laid hold of his arm, which so provoked him that he broke Mr. Mathews' sword in two. This gentleman complained of hard treatment and Sheridan offered him another sword to renew the combat, but he had been sufficiently frightened and, without making any further resistance, signed the apology as dictated by his antagonist.

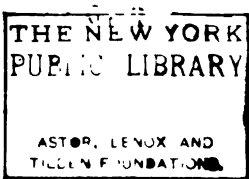
¹ Sheridan stated that Mr. Ewart was his second.

Being convinced that the Legislature in its up of the Sheridans
 in its own right, in the efforts of the nation and the nation's future
 which is at stake. I have paid to the nation's future, to the nation's future,
 and particularly to the nation's future, for my own sake and the nation's future.

1894 Sheridan, Pub. Pa.

MATHEWS' APOLOGY TO SHERIDAN.

Vol. i. To face p. 178.



“They then drove to release Charles Sheridan, who had only accompanied his brother on the occasion to give him what assistance he could, had the event proved unfortunate.”

I add Sheridan's own version of the story, which has not yet been published in full:—“It has ever been esteemed impertinent to appeal to the public in concerns entirely private; but there now and then occurs a private incident which, by being explained, may be productive of public advantage. This consideration and the precedent of a public appeal in this same affair, are my only apologies for the following lines.

“Mr. T. Mathews thought himself injured by Mr. R. Sheridan's having co-operated in the virtuous efforts of a young lady to escape the snares of vice and dissimulation. He wrote several most abusive threats to Mr. S., then in France. He laboured, with a cruel industry, to vilify his character in England. He publicly posted him as a scoundrel and a liar. Mr. S. answered him from France (hurried and surprised), that he should never sleep in England till he had treated him as he deserved.

“Mr. S. arrived in London at 9 o'clock at night. At 10 he is informed by Mr. S. Ewart, that Mr. M. is in Town. Mr. S. had sat up at Canterbury, to keep his idle promise to Mr. M. He resolved to call on him that night, as, in case he had not found him in Town, he had called on Mr. Ewart to accompany him to Bath, being bound by Mr. Linley not to let anything pass between him and Mr. M. till

he had arrived thither. Mr. S. went to Mr. Cocklin's, in Crutched Friars (where Mr. M. was lodged), about half after twelve. The key of Mr. C.'s door was lost ; Mr. S. was denied admittance. By 2 o'clock he got in. Mr. M. had been previously down to the door, and told Mr. S. he should be admitted, and had retired to rest again. He dressed, complained of the cold, endeavoured to get heat into him, called Mr. S. his dear friend, and forced him to sit down.

"Mr. S. had been informed that Mr. M. had sworn his death ;—that Mr. M. had, in numberless companies, produced bills on France, whither he meant to retire on the completion of his revenge. Mr. M. had warned Mr. Ewart to advise his friend not even to come in his way without a sword, as he could not answer for the consequences.

"Mr. M. had left two letters for Mr. S., in which he declares he is to be met with at any hour, and begs Mr. S. will not deprive himself of so much sleep, or stand on any ceremony ! Mr. S. called on him at the hour mentioned. Mr. S. was admitted with the difficulty mentioned. Mr. S. declares that, on Mr. M.'s perceiving that he came with pistols¹ to answer the challenge, he does not remember ever to have seen a Man behave so perfectly dastardly. Mr. M. detained Mr. S. till seven o'clock the next morning. He [Mr. M.] said he never meant to quarrel with Mr. S. He convinced Mr. S. that his enmity might be directed solely against his brother

¹ In Moore's transcript of a part of this letter the words "with pistols" are omitted.

and another gentleman at Bath. Mr. S. went to Bath ; in an hour he found every one of Mr. M.'s assertions totally and positively disavowed. Mr. S. staid but 3 hours in Bath. He returned to London. He sent to Mr. M. from Hyde-parck. He came with Captain Knight his second. He objected frequently to the ground. They adjourned to the Hercules Pillars. They returned to Hyde-parck. Mr. M. objected to the observation of an officer. They returned to Hercules Pillars. They adjourned to the Bedford Coffee-house by agreement. Mr. M. was gone to the Castel Tavern. Mr. S. followed with Mr. E. Mr. M. made many declarations in favour of Mr. S. They engaged. Mr. M. was disarmed, Captain Knight ran in. Mr. M. begged his life and afterwards denied the advantage. Mr. S. was provoked by (the really well-meant) interposition of Captain Knight and the illusion of Mr. M. He insisted, since Mr. M. denied the advantage, that he should give up his sword. Mr. M. denied, but sooner than return to his ground he gave it up. It was broke, and Mr. M. [was] offered another. He was then called on to retract his abuse and beg Mr. S.'s pardon. With much altercation and much ill-grace he complied.

“The affair was settled. The sword's being broke was not to be mentioned, if Mr. M. never misrepresented the affair. Mr. S. came to Bath. He gave Mr. M. credit. Mr. M. came to Bath,—he misrepresented the whole transaction. He wrote to all his acquaintance. He told his own story. Mr. S. wrote to nobody. He contradicted whatever was

told him as Mr. M.'s misrepresentation. Mr. M. found that Truth prevailed. He feared the aspersion of want of resolution. He grew desperate and [now] seems resolved to force Mr. S. to hazard life (which he confessed he had once received from him) to establish his reputation. Mr. S. flatters his own charity that he has in this representation treated Mr. M. most tenderly. As to the truth of it let their seconds (Mr. Ewart and Captain Knight) decide. R. B. Sheridan." It is added :—"Written in the Parade Coffee-house, 9 o'clock, Tuesday night."

I now resume Mrs. Henry Lefanu's narrative :—"These transactions took place early in the year 1772. About that period the elder Mr. Sheridan returned from Ireland, and though not altogether satisfied with some occurrences that had taken place during his absence, yet on the whole did not show much displeasure, considering his youngest son's flight under the light he chose to represent it, of having gone to France merely as an escort to Miss Linley, and the subsequent meeting with Mr. Mathews as unavoidable. He had also some cause of displeasure with respect to the numerous debts his son had contracted to carry on his various plans; but these he discharged on promise of more prudence in future."

Sheridan's elder brother wrote two letters to his uncle, Mr. Richard Chamberlaine, giving his version of the encounter with Mathews. One is undated; Mr. Chamberlaine noted on the back that he received it on the 13th of May, 1772 :—"My dear Uncle, I wrote to you some time ago by Mrs. Lynn

and mentioned my brother's romantic expedition: he had acquitted himself in the most honourable manner, and the whole of his conduct, however imprudent it might have at first appeared, has, from the motives which influenced his undertaking, acquired him the greatest credit. But there was a circumstance I resolved never to acquaint you with till it was settled to my brother's satisfaction. This has just been done, and I shall narrate to you the whole event.

“ Mr. Mathews, the person from whom my brother had taken Miss Linley, in a fit of rage and disappointment put an advertisement into *The Bath Chronicle* in which he publicly called him *a liar and a treacherous scoundrel*; he not only did this but wrote to him the most impertinent letters and all upon a supposition that my brother had married Miss L[inley] and would never return to Bath. I suppose you will acknowledge it was impossible to have put up with these publick and private insults; every gentleman we were acquainted with thought it incumbent upon Dick to resent this properly, otherwise he could never show his face. But Dick's spirit did not require that the opinion of others should teach him what to do; he waited on Mr. Mathews on his arrival in London; his behaviour the first visit was so very condescending that Dick let him off for a very small concession to be made in the Bath paper.

“ Dick on coming here for the first time saw the advertisement against him, and then thought the apology then made by M[athews] was no concession

at all for so signal an insult ; this being also the opinion of everybody else, he immediately resolved to return to London and get proper satisfaction. I thought it incumbent on me to accompany him to prevent mischief, if possibly consistent with his honour ; we arrived in Town on Sunday (we would not call upon you as the purport of our coming must have been very disagreeable to you). I waited on M[athews] that evening, and after two hours' altercation could get him to make no further concessions. I foresaw all the disagreeable consequences attendant on coming to extremities, did all I could to prevent it, but a young man's stamping on himself the character of coward was worse than anything that could happen. They met the next day. Dick disarmed his antagonist ; made him beg his life and also sign an apology to be put in the Bath paper of his own inditing ; thus is the affair concluded highly to the honour of Dick, who is applauded by everyone, and whose conduct I hope you will approve of. . . . I am, my dear Uncle, your affectionate and dutiful nephew, Charles Francis Sheridan."

The next letter was written three days later, acknowledging one from Mr. Chamberlaine, who seems to have approved of what had passed ; furthermore, it contains a noteworthy statement of Charles's feelings with regard to Miss Linley :—
"Bath, May 18, 1772. My dear Uncle, I think I cannot sufficiently thank you for your last very kind letter. The generous warmth with which you expressed yourself in your approbation of what had been done in our last trip to London gave me the

most heartfelt satisfaction. My brother and I were greatly affected by it ; but it was with the feelings of gratitude to find that your goodness had made you interest yourself so warmly in what had passed, and those of pleasure to find that your prudence approved of a conduct which, from the difficulties my brother had unnecessarily brought himself to, we were afraid might have been deemed the effect of youthful heat and indiscretion.

“The necessity of the last step was evident, but that of the former one, of which the latter was a consequence, it would be more difficult to make clear ; however, I am certain his motives were good and by the event he has acquired great credit and honour.

“And I am surprised that in this age when the world does not abound in Josephs, most people are (notwithstanding the general tendency in mankind to judge unfavourably) inclined to think he acted with the strictest honour in his late expedition with Miss L[inley], when the circumstances might allow of their being very dubious on this head without incurring the imputation of being censorious.¹ For my part the whole has been of this advantage to me, which I think no inconsiderable one, that thro’ it I have totally got rid of my very ridiculous attachment for the first cause of all this trouble, which had before made me very unhappy, and which was the

¹ A letter from Mr. Thomas Sheridan is extant which displays his lack of charity, inasmuch as he puts a much harsher construction on his younger son’s conduct than the elder had done, or than the “most people” to whom reference is made.

more absurd as I could possibly have no view in it, and that I was at the same time conscious to myself that I was indulging a passion' which could only make me acquainted with the pains of love but never taste its sweets.

"To excuse my folly I can only plead the many charms and attractions of Miss L[inley], which were sufficient to make a man, even supposing him not particularly attached to her (as was the case with my brother), do a more silly thing than Dick did, for not to take from his merit, I cannot help thinking that beauty in distress has always a very powerful advocate in the breast of every man who beholds it, and that virtue unfortunate, without the help of a pretty face, would scarcely have found him or anyone else such a knight errant.

"You desire me to tell you something about my father; I got a letter from him the same day I received yours: he had only heard of Dick's safe return from France with Mr. and Miss L[inley] and was well enough reconciled to the part he had taken in the affair, as I had convinced him his motives were wholly honourable and that Dick could scarcely have acted otherwise consistent with humanity. How he will relish the account of the duel I am at a loss to determine, but expect shortly to hear from him on that head also; I think the necessity of it makes it impossible for him to blame my brother, and the manner of it must, I should imagine, give him pleasure. . . . I am, my dear Uncle, your ever affectionate and dutiful Nephew, Charles Francis Sheridan."

At this period the meetings in Spring Gardens at Bath took place which Moore erroneously thought had preceded the trip to France. Then, the pair could see each other daily without concealment. Now, their movements were closely watched. They had disputes, and the following verses were written by Sheridan with the view of justifying himself to Miss Linley. A grotto in the Gardens was the scene; the following version is copied from her manuscript :—

I.

“Uncouth is this moss-covered grotto of stone,
And damp is the shade of this dew-dripping tree ;
Yet I this rude grotto with rapture will own
And willow, thy damps are refreshing to me.

II.

“For this is the grotto where Laura retired ;
As late I in secret her confidence sought ;
And this is the tree kept her safe from the wind,
As blushing she heard one grave lesson I taught.

III.

“Then tell me, thou grotto of moss-covered stone,
And tell me, thou willow with leaves dripping dew,
Did Laura seem vexed when Horatio was gone?
And did she confess her resentment to you ?

IV.

“Methinks now each bough as you're waving it, tries
To whisper a cause for the sorrow I feel :
So hint how she frowned when I dared to advise ;
And sighed when she saw that I did it with zeal.

V.

“True, true, silly leaves, so she did, I allow ;
She frowned ; but no rage in her looks did I see :
She frowned ; but reflection had clouded her brow :
She sighed ; but, perhaps, 'twas in pity for me.

VI.

"Then wave thy leaves brisker, thou willow of woe ;
I tell thee no rage in her looks could I see ;
I cannot, I will not, believe it was so,
She was not, she could not be angry with me.

VII.

"For well did she know that my heart meant no wrong ;
It sank at the thought but of giving her pain ;
But trusted its task to a faltering tongue,
Which erred from the feelings it could not explain.

VIII.

"Yet, oh ! if, indeed, I've offended the maid ;
If Laura my humble monition refuse ;
Sweet willow, the next time she visits thy shade,
Fan gently her bosom, and plead my excuse.

IX.

"And thou, stony grot, in thy arch may'st preserve
Two lingering drops of the night-fallen dew ;
And just let them fall at her feet, and they'll serve
As tears of my sorrow entrusted to you.

X.

"Or lest they unheeded should fall at her feet,
Let them fall on her bosom of snow ; and I swear
The next time I visit thy moss-covered seat,
I'll pay thee each drop with a genuine tear.

XI.

"So, may'st thou, green willow, for ages thus toss
Thy branches so lank o'er the slow winding stream ;
And thou, stony grotto, retain all thy moss,
While yet there's a poet to make thee his theme.

XII.

"Nay, more—may my Laura still give you her charms
Each evening, and sometimes the whole ev'ning long,
Then grotto, be proud to support her white arms,
Then willow, wave all thy green tops to her song."

The following letter from Miss Linley, which was written soon after the verses, proves that they must have been composed subsequently to the trip to France :—

“Eleven o’clock. Though I parted from you so lately, and though I expect to see you again so soon, yet cannot I keep my fingers from the pen but I must be plaguing you with my scrawl. Oh, my dearest love, I am never happy but when I am with you. I cannot speak or think of anything else. When shall we have another happy half-hour? I declare I have not felt real joy since I came from France before this evening. Perhaps now whilst I am writing and amusing myself by expressing the tender sentiments which I feel for you, you are flirting with Miss W.,¹ or some other handsome girl, or making fine speeches to [illegible] scold. I do not believe any such thing, but give me leave to doubt that I may with greater pleasure be convinced to the contrary. No, my life and Soul, I love you to such a degree, that I should never bear to see you (even in joak) show any particular attention to another. Judge then by my writing if I doubt your constancy. When shall I hear from you? Let me have that satisfaction at least, altho’ it is impossible

¹ In the “Bath Picture, in 1771,” by Mr. Andrews, this line occurs :—

“And our Waller’s as sweet in her voice.”

Sheridan’s reply, called, “Clio’s Protest,” contains these lines :—

“Clio, poor girl! must now turn squaller
And join in concert with his Waller.”

This may be the lady to whom Miss Linley refers.

to see you so often. If you do speak to that woman, I think we might contrive to send our letters there, directed under feigned names. I could easily frame some excuse for getting them. Till then I shall expect you will write your letters and give them yourself—for I do insist on hearing from you, for I am sure it is nothing but laziness that prevents you.

“I really think Charles suspected something this evening. He looked amazingly knowing when I came down. Duce take his curious head. I wish he would mind his own business and not interrupt us in our stolen pleasures. Is it not amazing, my dear Love, that we should always have so great an inclination for what is not in our possession? . . .

“Let me see, what have I more to say?—nothing but the same dull story over and over again—that I love you to distraction, and that I would prefer you and beggary before any other man with a throne. I will call you Horatio—that was the name you gave yourself in that sweet poem—write to me then, my dear Horatio, and tell me that you are equally sincere and constant. . . .

“My hand shakes so at this moment I can scarce hold the pen. My father came into my room this moment, and I had just time to stuff the letter behind the glass. ’Twas well he did not take much notice of me, for I was. . . . Good-bye. God bless—I will. . . .”¹

¹ The first letter in the collection, from which this and others are taken, is too unimportant to be given in the text. However, as it is very short, I may reproduce it here :—“For fear I should not be able to speak to you, I write to tell you I shall be at Mrs.

The following letter may have succeeded that just quoted ; but, in the absence of a date, or any other clue, the order of succession is mere guess-work. It possesses intrinsic interest, inasmuch as the contents show how averse Miss Linley really was to appearing at public concerts, and that her feeling in this matter, as well as aversion to Mathews, incited her to seek refuge in a French Convent :—"Twelve o'clock. You unconscionable creature to make me sit up this time of the night to scribble nonsense to you, when you will not let me hear one word from you for this week to come. Oh, my dear, you are the Tyrant indeed. Yet do not fancy I would do this if it was not equally agreeable to myself. Indeed, my dearest love, I am never happy except when I am with you, or writing to you. Why did you run away so soon to-night? Tho' I could not enjoy your conversation freely, yet it was a consolation to me that you was so near me. I gave up my cords the moment you left me, as I could not play with any patience. My father and I had a long conversation this morning. He wanted me to go to a private concert at Dr. Davenport's, but I availed myself of his promise [made at Lille ?] and excused myself, as I am resolved not to go so much to those kind of meetings. He says he shall have a concert for my brother's benefit in a fortnight, and he shall expect my performance without any objections.

Lyn's this evening. Don't tell Lissy [his younger sister] that you know of my being there, as I promised her I would not tell you. Only think of Captain Hodges ! I am frightened out of my wits."

You know I could not refuse him ; but I am resolved never to go into public but on these occasions.

“My mother and me called on Miss Roscoe this evening, when we talked a great deal about you. Miss R. said she was sure you and I should make a match of it. Nay, she said the whole world was of the opinion that we should be married in less than a month. Only think of this, bright Hevn’s! God bless you, my dear, dear love. I am so weary I must go to bed. There is but one thing that could keep me awake and that is your company. Once more adieu. . . .

“Upon my knees, half nacked, once more I am going to tire you with my nonsense. I could not bear to see this little blank without filling it up. Tho’ I do not know with what, as I have almost exhausted the Budget of news which I had collected since our long absence. I do insist that you write to me, you lazy wretch, can’t you take so small a trouble? . I can receive your letter by the same method. My sister is very impatient that I don’t come into bed, but I feel more happiness in this situation, tho’ I am half froze, than in the warmest bed in England. . . .”

Mr. Linley had arranged that his daughter should go to Oxford and sing there. Before her departure she wrote to Sheridan :—“Wednesday night, 12 o’clock. The anxiety I felt whilst in my dear Horatio’s company to-night would not let me feel the pains of separation, but now that I am retired, and at full liberty to give way to my own unpleasing ideas, I cannot describe what I feel to be so long

divided from you. Oh, my love, how vain are your doubts and suspicions; believe me, if I thought it possible for me to change my present sentiments of you, I should despise myself. Never shall you have the least reason to suspect my constancy or my love. I am in a very gloomy disposition to-night, but I will not give way to it. I will try to forget every disagreeable circumstance, and only look forward to those happy hours which I hope are still in store for us. With what rapture shall we meet, when we may do so without constraint, when I may live in your arms without the fear of parents, or [care for] the ill-natured world. I could write to you without ever leaving off, but my sister insists on my coming to bed. It is now near one o'clock, and I am to be up by five to-morrow. God bless you, my ever dear Horatio. Think of me while I am absent, and don't let any idea disturb your peace in regard to me, for while I live I can never cease to be your own Eliza."

Miss Linley was engaged in writing the following letter when Sheridan was accepting a challenge from Mathews to fight a second duel:—"Oxford, Monday, 12 o'clock. How shall I account to my dear Horatio for my long silence? Will he permit me to excuse myself by pleading the continual hurry which I have been in since I parted from him? Indeed, nothing should have hindered my writing before but the shocking situation I was in, all day confined to my business, and at night my mother took away the candle for fear I should read. It was an absolute impossibility to elude her vigi-

lance. We came here this morning, and I have taken the first opportunity to assure you of my unabated love.

“Whilst I was at Chester, I went to the Masquerade, but such a scene of confusion and fright I never saw, and sincerely hope I never shall again. Mrs. Williams (whose husband was the principal leader in the affair) made it her business to insist on our going with her, and she was so pressing, my father could not refuse her. I own as I had never seen anything of the kind I had some curiosity, but it is perfectly satisfied. I would not go through the fatigue of another for the world. We had two dresses apiece. Mine was a pilgrim and a Spanish lady; Polly’s a shepherdess and another pilgrim. The crowd was so great at the door, that, before I could get into the room, the fright overcame me and I fainted in the midst of them. On the return of my senses I found somebody going to pull me by my legs, as you would a dead horse; this roused me, and I gave them a hearty kick.

“Luckily a gentleman that I knew came by who took care of me home, where I was going to pull off my finery and stay at home, but I was prevented by Mrs. Williams who came to fetch me to my mother and sister who had made their way through the crowd and was got safe. At last I got to this famous affair, but never was disappointment equal to mine, to see such a nonsensical puppet show. I walked about as tired of the Masquerade as I am at a long sermon. The impudent looks and speeches of the men were too much for me. I forgot that I

had a mask on and really felt myself very much affronted at their ill-bred stares. So much for the masquerade.¹

“At Cambridge there was nothing but the music which was very fine. I was extremely ill for two days. I was taken ill in the church during the Oratorio of Samson. I fainted and was carried out. This raised no small bustle among the Cantabs, as they call them. I need not describe them to you, they are a strange set; though, upon the whole, I really think they are more rational beings than the Oxonians. It seems there is to be a very great riot here on one of the nights. They don't like the music, and intend calling the Governors to an account. How it will end God knows.

“I have not been out since I came here. I shall be very happy when I am once more in Bath. I

¹ Seventeen years afterwards, she went dressed as a gipsy to another masquerade, of which her sister-in-law Elizabeth wrote an account to her sister in Dublin. It took place in Mrs. Sturt's house at Hammersmith, which had belonged to Lord Melcombe:—“I stuck close to Mrs. Sheridan and we unmasked very soon. She was of course accosted by a great many with abundance of fine things, and I came in for my share of civility. About one the Prince of Wales and Duke of Clarence arrived, dressed as Highland chiefs; nothing could be more elegant or becoming than their dress. The Prince came up to Mrs. S. to inquire for Dick. . . . After supper the Prince proposed to Mrs. S. to join him in a trio, which she did at once. . . . The company as you may suppose were all delighted with this unexpected pleasure. The Prince proposed a couple more and then gave over for fear of tiring Mrs. S. He has a good voice and being so well supported seemed to me to sing very well. . . . I think I never saw Mrs. Sheridan look handsomer.”

cannot tell how much I long to see you, to ask you a thousand questions. Oh, my dear Horatio, I have had many perplexing thoughts since I have been absent, but I will hope for the best. If I find you well and happy on my return I shall be content. It is much if I am not with you as soon as this letter. Till then receive my tenderest affections, and let me find you constant as I left you. If my prayers are granted, I shall once more embrace my Horatio, and convince him how sincerely I am his Eliza."¹

¹ Not content with giving vent to her feelings in prose, Miss Linley often expressed them in verse. In her day young men and women rhymed with ease on any occasion. Her verse-making knack was superior, however, to that of many contemporaries. The last six stanzas from a poem called "Eliza's Choice," will serve to show its quality :—

I.

"The sweets of solitude to share
With the dear youth I love,
Shall be my only joy and care,
No more I wish to prove.

II.

"With him to wander o'er the
mead,
Which Spring hath newly drest,
And praise the power which thus
decreed
We should be truly blest.

III.

"To view the bushes how they
bloom,
And throw their sweets around,
While birds with joy their songs
resume
And hills and dales resound.

IV.

"Should sorrow e'er oppress his
heart,
And cloud his brow serene,
Though Nature all her sweets im-
part
To deck the beauteous scene,

V.

"I'll lead him from the noon-day
heat
Within some leafy bower,
There soothe his soul with concord
sweet,
Or music's soothing power.

VI.

"Or if a book still more amuse
And ease his pensive mind,
Some favourite author will I
choose
Till he's to peace resigned."

VI.

FROM BATH TO EAST BURNHAM.

SHERIDAN and Miss Linley saw less of each other after plighting their troth before a Roman Catholic priest near Calais than they had previously done when simple friends in Bath. Neither of them had the courage to reveal what had occurred, and each may have felt that the ceremony was informal, if not illegal. Their position was a false one, and it led to misunderstandings which could not easily be explained. They met on the footing of strangers and they corresponded by stealth. Meanwhile, the villain of the drama was not idle. Though worsted in a duel and compelled to sue for life, Mathews had not renounced the design of rendering himself obnoxious, while cherishing the desire to revenge his tarnished honour by killing Miss Linley's champion.

The course of events is thus traced by Mrs. Henry Lefanu :—" In May, 1772, Mr. Charles Sheridan was, through the interest of Mr. Wheatley, a friend of his father's, appointed Secretary to the Legation in Sweden. His father went to London with him to make the necessary preparations for his entering on

his new situation and also to enjoy his society as long as possible, always having been strongly attached to that son. During their absence, Mr. Mathews came to Bath in order to make some attempts to regain his lost character by forcing young Sheridan to meet him once more. He had found himself so shunned and despised after the former business when he returned to Wales, where his property lay, that he was induced to listen to the suggestions of a gentleman [Mr. Barnett?] lately settled in his neighbourhood, who pointed out that method [fighting a duel] as the only one that could wipe out the shame he had incurred.

"This gentleman, Mr. Barnard [Barnett?], accompanied him to Bath, was the bearer of the challenge which he had the cruelty to put into Miss Sheridan's hand saying it was a note of invitation for her Brother. The parties met on Claverton Down the following morning at so early an hour they had hardly light to see what they were engaged in. Sheridan rushed on Mathews with a view of disarming him as he had done before, but from the unevenness of the ground, he fell and with a degree of violence that brought them both to the ground and broke both swords. In the struggle Mathews, who was many years older than Sheridan and much stronger, contrived to keep him under him on the ground and with a piece of the broken sword stabbed him repeatedly in the body and in the face.

"Sheridan held up his right hand to defend himself and also to show he was unarmed. His hand

was dreadfully cut in this exertion. Mathews desired him to beg his life: he answered, 'I will neither beg it nor receive it from such a villain.'

"Mathews then renewed his attack, and having picked up the point of one of the swords ran it through the side of the antagonist's throat and pinned him to the ground with it, exclaiming with an oath: 'I have done for him.' He then left the field accompanied by his second and, getting into a carriage with four horses which had been waiting for him, drove off.

"He had settled all his affairs so as to be ready for immediate flight in case of accidents. Sheridan's whole preparation was three letters, one to his father, one to Miss Linley and one to his sisters. During the whole scene the seconds had taken no part. Mr. Sheridan's second [Mr. Paumier] a very young man and quite new to such affairs said once to Mr. Barnard, [Barnett?] when he saw his friend hold up his hand, that they ought to be parted, but Mr. B. answered they were both on the ground and the advantage equal. Paumier then entreated Sheridan would beg his life, and became so agitated as scarcely to know what he did.

"On Mathews quitting the ground the postillions raised Mr. Sheridan into the chaise and, putting his companion in with him, drove from the Downs to the White Hart in an almost incredible short time. Messieurs Ditcher and Sharp, the two most eminent surgeons of that time, were called in and after his wounds were dressed they would not allow

of his being removed from the bed he was placed on. His sisters were informed of the business the following morning and, going to him they found his situation from noise and heat so very uncomfortable, they obtained leave from the Medical gentlemen to have him carefully removed to his own house.

"At the time of this event sometime in June 1772,¹ Miss Linley was engaged to sing at the music meeting at Oxford.

"The account of the duel, with the addition of Sheridan's life being despaired of, was in all the papers, but they were carefully concealed from Miss Linley, as her Father was well aware she could not have appeared in public had she known what had passed. It is to this circumstance that Mr. T. Grenville alludes when he speaks of the compassion he felt for Miss Linley, as I perfectly remember his saying that Miss Linley's appearance on that day inspired the greatest interest in the company present. As her ignorance of the duel and its consequences

¹ The duel was fought on the 2nd of July. *The Bath Chronicle* for that day contained the following account of it:—"This morning, about 3 o'clock, a second duel was fought with swords, between Captain Mathews and Mr. R. Sheridan, on King's Down, near this city, in consequence of their former dispute concerning an amiable young lady, which Mr. M. considered as improperly adjusted; Mr. S. having, since their first rencontre, declared his sentiments respecting Mr. M. in a manner that the former thought required satisfaction. Mr. Sheridan received three or four wounds in his breast and sides, and now lies very ill. Mr. M. was only slightly wounded, and left this city soon after the affair was over."

were known to every person, and her beauty, joined to the effect of her truly enchanting powers, could not fail of exciting a degree of sympathy in youthful and susceptible minds, when they thought of the heavy calamity that hung over her.

“Immediately after the performance, Mr. Linley’s family left Oxford on their return to Bath. Within a few miles of that place the party were met by Mr. Panton, a clergyman, and a friend of the family. This gentleman proposed her quitting her father’s chaise and accompanying him the rest of the way. He then in the most cautious manner informed her of what had passed ; but all these precautions were not sufficient to prevent her being dreadfully affected by the stroke, and during her agitation she insisted on being permitted to see him, declaring she was his wife and as such entitled to attend on him.¹ But this could not be complied with as Mr. Sheridan’s Father was now returned from London and was so grieved and incensed at his son’s second duel that he even refused to see him on his arrival and strictly forbade all intercourse between his daughters and the Linley family. The youngest, however, [and writer of this narrative] contrived to convey some intelligence to her Brother when she perceived how

¹ Moore expanded this passage and inserted words which have been often quoted as Miss Linley’s own :—“Notwithstanding this precaution, her feelings were so taken by surprize that, in the distress of the moment, she let the secret of her heart escape and passionately exclaimed, ‘My husband ! my husband !’ demanding to see him, and insisting on her right as a wife to be near him and watch over him day and night.”

unhappy he was on that subject. In the course of a few days Mr. Sheridan was prevailed on to see his son and all displeasure seemed over."

While Sheridan's sisters were filled with sympathy and affection for him in his affliction and eager to lighten his pain, Charles Francis thought the moment opportune for sending unpleasant comments and advice in a letter from London, worthy of Joseph Surface, which is dated the 3rd of July, 1772:—"It was with the deepest concern I received the late accounts of you though it was somewhat softened by the assurance of your not being in the least danger. You cannot conceive the uneasiness it occasioned to my father. Both he and I were resolved to believe the best, and to suppose you safe, but then we neither of us could approve of the cause in which you suffer. All your friends have condemned you. You risked everything, where you had nothing to gain, to give your antagonist the thing he wished, a chance for recovering his reputation. Your courage was past dispute: he wanted to get rid of the contemptible opinion he was held in, and you were good-natured enough to let him do it at your expence. It is not now a time to scold, but all your friends were of opinion you could, with the greatest propriety, have refused to meet him. For my part, I shall suspend my judgment till better informed. only I cannot forgive your preferring swords. I am exceedingly unhappy at the situation I leave you in with respect to money matters, the more so as it is totally out of my power to be of any use to you. Ewart was greatly vexed at the manner of your

drawing for the last £20—I own, I think with some reason.

“As to old Ewart, what you were talking about is absolutely impossible; he is already surprised at Mr. Linley’s long delay, and, indeed, I think the latter much to blame in this respect. I did intend to give you some account of myself since my arrival here, but you cannot conceive how I have been hurried,—even much pressed for time at this present writing. I must therefore conclude, with wishing you speedily restored to health, and that if I could make your purse as whole as that will shortly be, I hope, it would make me extremely happy.”

Mr. Thomas Sheridan gave his version of what had occurred in a letter to his brother-in-law Mr. Richard Chamberlaine, which was written on the 9th of July:—“I did not choose to make any enquiries about the affair from my son till this morning, otherwise I should have writ to you yesterday. He is, I thank God, wonderfully recovered, and I hope he will be able to go abroad in two or three days. Some messages he received from Mathews conveyed in the most opprobrious terms, and at last a letter filled with the most scurrilous abuse, made him lose all patience and hurried him into giving him a meeting which he had before resolved against. They had not exchanged three passes before they both closed in, both fell, and both their swords were broke. But my son’s snapped across within four inches of the hilt and that of Mr. Mathews was only shivered in the middle, leaving a jagged point

and running tapering up a great way of the blade.

“At first my son had the advantage in the fall, having thrown Mathews down, but as the ground happened to be sloping where they fell, the other rolled over him, and got uppermost. My son called out that he had nothing to defend himself with ; the other holding the pointed part of the sword over him, which he had picked up from the ground, bid him beg his life. My son said he never would beg his life from such a scoundrel ; Mathews then began to stab him, and my son after the first wound caught hold of one part of it, so as that the other could not disengage it. He then proceeded to stab him with the jagged pointed sword which he held in the other hand, uttering horrid curses all the while. It is said that the number of stabs which he made as quick as possible, could not be less than twenty or thirty ; my son had the good fortune to put by most of them with his hand, so that they only penetrated his coat, but five of them took place, fortunately all flesh wounds, having been stopped by the bones. Mathews then went off swearing he had done for him.

“Never was more concern shown on any occasion than was here to be seen in all classes of people on my son’s account ; for he bears an excellent character, and is much beloved. And never were more execrations poured upon any head than that of the vile assassin. Never was a man so universally detested, and I do verily believe were he to appear in the streets of Bath by day, he would be stoned to death

by the populace. If ever he should show his head here again he will be shunned as one infected by the plague. I have not time to say anything more, but hereafter you shall have farther particulars. If Charles should be detained in London, tell him I expect to hear from him. My love to the little woman. All my young folks join in love and duty to you both."¹

Mrs. Henry Lefanu's narrative continues:—"Through some of his friends R. B. Sheridan found out that Miss Linley's assertion of her marriage had answered no end but suggesting the idea to both Fathers of breaking off the match; Mr. Linley to secure to himself the advantage of her talents, and Mr. Thomas Sheridan from a high spirit of honour which made him averse to his son's forming a connexion with a person whose name had been so much the subject of public discussion. Miss Linley was at this time sometimes at Bristol and sometimes at Wells with her relations. Sheridan, still confined to his room in consequence of his wounds, wrote frequently to charge her to be cautious of acknowledging anything that might assist the views of their Fathers. Many traps were laid for both parties, but they contrived to

¹ On the 14th of May, 1821, Lord Thanet told Moore that "Lord John Townshend and (I think) Hare went to Bath for the purpose of getting acquainted with Mathews, and making inquiries about his affair with Sheridan. Mathews described the duel as a mere hoax—in fact, as no duel at all; that Sheridan came drunk, and that he (Mathews) could have killed him with the greatest ease if he had chosen." Moore rightly adds, "A precious fellow this Mathews was!"—*Diary*, vol. iii., p. 233.

evade them, attributing what she had uttered before Mr. Panton and others to mere agitation of mind.

“When R. B. Sheridan was sufficiently recovered to admit of his going out, his Father proposed his joining him in a prosecution against Mathews whom he considered in the light of a murderer. He had already taken the deposition of the postillions before a magistrate, and every circumstance I have stated of the Duel was then given on oath. The elder Miss Sheridan was present with her father.

“R. B. Sheridan, however, for obvious reasons declined entering on the business as he did not wish to have his wife’s name brought forward which would be unavoidable in such a prosecution. He promised his father, however, not to have any more intercourse with one who was displeasing to him, and ‘took an oath equivocal’ not to marry Miss Linley.”

While Sheridan was lying on a sick-bed, Captain Paumier, his second in the duel, conveyed to him this letter from Miss Linley :—“I cannot resist the opportunity of thanking my dearest Horatio for his concern for me. Believe me I have not been in my senses these two days, but the happy account of your recovery has perfectly restored them. Oh! my dearest love when shall I see you. I will not ask you to write as I am sure it must hurt you. I am going to Wells to-morrow. I am obliged to be there before my father returns and I expect him very soon. I shall not be happy till I hear from

you there. Oh! my Horatio I did not know till now how much I loved you. Believe me had you died I should certainly [have] dressed myself as a man and challenged M[athews]. He should have killed me or I would have revenged you and myself. I cannot stay to write more as Mr. P[aumier] is waiting. I suppose you can trust him. I will not write again till I hear from you at Wells as I do not know how to direct safely. God in Heaven bless you my dearest Horatio and restore you once more to health to happiness and the arms of your Eliza."

Not receiving a reply, she wrote to him from Wells:—"Saturday morning. To what can I impute your silence. At a time, too, when you must be certain that I am [in] the most dreadful state of suspense. . . . I was surprised not to find a letter [at the post yesterday] when it was my particular request. I received a letter from my mother which has if possible increased my uneasiness. After telling me that my father and yours have had many serious conversations, she adds, 'I could say more but am not permitted.'

"I am ordered to stay here a week longer. My father wrote two or three lines at the bottom of my mother's letter, where he tells me how your father has behaved and of your sending him a note, but he says that it is of no use to him [Mr. Linley] as you are under age, and he does not suppose it will be [within] your power to keep your word. . . . It is strongly reported that we [are married] and that I discovered it in my fright when I first heard of your duel.

Then there is a long lecture with hopes that it is not true and that I will convince the world I have more spirit and prudence &c. &c.

“Now what am I to think of all this? Can you imagine Horatio that I can be easy under these circumstances? For God’s sake write to me. Tell me what has happened and do not hide anything from me. I have been tortured with ten thousand apprehensions ever since your first letter. And now if possible I am more so. . . . [If I do not hear] from you by the next post I [shall begin] to think my happiness is no longer [dear] to you. Therefore if you wish me still to believe you faithful do not fail to [comfort] your sincere Eliza.”

It is probable that the pair had met at Bath after Miss Linley’s return from Wells. The following letter refers to what Sheridan felt and had expressed in writing :—“How can you my dear Horatio torment yourself and me with such unjust suspicions. My behaviour last night proceeded from the anxiety I felt on perceiving you look so remarkably grave. If I was prudent it was my father’s conversation that made me so. He declared he would sooner follow me to the grave than see me married to you as you would ruin me and yourself in a short time by your extravagance. I know he watched us last night; ’twas that which made me cautious. If I said anything in my note to offend you, impute it to my desire to have you esteemed by your father.

“You cannot have any doubts in regard to R——. Believe me I have wrote to him to put an end to every future hope. I never can think of another.

I do not know how to see you. My situation at present is very disagreeable. I am not suffered to go out without my father or mother, and I am so watched I can scarce find a moment to write. We must have patience. In the meantime assure yourself of the sincerity of my intentions for I ever will be my dear Horatio's, Eliza."

It may be inferred that these letters were written in July. On the 9th of that month *The Bath Chronicle* announced that Richard Sheridan was out of danger. Mrs. Henry Lefanu states that Mr. Grenville, afterwards second Earl Temple and first Marquess of Buckingham, revisited Bath in July and took lessons in elocution from Mr. Sheridan, with the happy result of being entirely cured of stammering, an infirmity from which he had suffered during many years. He was accompanied by his tutor, Mr. Cleaver, afterwards Bishop of St. Asaph, and by his brother Thomas, who then made Sheridan's acquaintance, with the result of a friendship springing up between them which continued without cloud or break till they were divided by death.¹

¹ Thomas, the second son of George Grenville, was born in 1755, and lived till 1846. He was one of Fox's most ardent supporters in the House of Commons, and he was employed in several diplomatic missions. He filled the offices of President of the Board of Control and First Lord of the Admiralty, and he was the last Chief Justice in Eyre south of the Trent, a sinecure of which the salary was £2,000. He returned to the public in books the value of what he had received in money, his library, numbering 20,000 volumes, being bequeathed by him to the British Museum.

Mr. Thomas Sheridan had accepted an engagement at the Theatre Royal, Dublin, for the following winter. He then determined, as his daughter, Mrs. Henry Lefanu, writes, to give up his house in Bath and to send his daughters back to France "under the care of their brother Richard whom he wished to acquire a knowledge of the French language. Everything was settled for their setting out for St. Quentin, where they had many friends, when it was discovered that R. B. S[heridan] continued privately to see Miss L[inley]. His father no longer thought him a proper guardian for his sisters whom he resolved to take with him to Ireland and his son [Richard Brinsley] was sent to Waltham Abbey, in Essex, where he was placed under the care of particular friends of Mr. Sheridan, Mr. and Mrs. Parker. His name was entered [at] the Middle Temple, and it was stipulated that he should only go to London to attend the Terms, the latter end of September, 1772.¹ Mr. Sheridan with his daughters went to Ireland, Mr. Grenville, his brother and Mr. Cleaver going at the same time to visit that country."

When Miss Linley heard of the arrangement for the removal of the family to Dublin, she pencilled the following note on a Tuesday night at 12 o'clock:—"You see to what shifts I am reduced. I have lost my ink, but I hope you will be able to understand me as I could not resist the inclination I had to thank my dear Horatio for his sweet letter;—but is it possible you can ever believe I can change or bestow one serious thought on any object or any

¹ Mrs. Henry Lefanu is mistaken, as Sheridan did not become a member of the Middle Temple till the 6th of April, 1773.

other pursuit in life? My whole soul is devoted to you, nor would I change my present situation to be the wife of any man. Yet though I despise the ties that govern vulgar souls, yet I must look sometimes towards a time when I hope it will be in my dear Horatio's power at least to make me his in every sense of the word. . . . But as it is we must submit till fortune puts it [in] our power to be happy our own way.

"How could you tease me about Miss C——? Indeed, my love, if you believe her you would hurt me very much, as I give you my word and honour I never gave her the least reason to think that you was of the least consequence with me more than as a friend. Nor could the hints that Lissy dropt proceed from anything I ever said, as I assure you I never have nor ever will make a confident of any one; be easy then, my dearest love, on that head, as I am resolved for once to convince you that I can keep a secret. How beautiful at this moment does that bright moon appear! Yes, my Horatio, it was conscious that thy Eliza's thoughts were wholly fixed on thee, nor can any other idea remove thy loved remembrance from my heart, I feel I love you every day more tenderly; I cannot support the idea of a separation, and yet I have sometimes horrid thoughts of your going to Dublin. Oh, my loved Horatio, what will then become of your Eliza? But I will not make myself unhappy with imaginary evils. If you love me and will always be constant in every situation, I will be yet at peace, and in that hope even, it is impossible but I must be happy. 'One

woe doth tread upon another's heels ; so fast they follow.' I had before lost my ink, and now my candle is just burnt out. God bless you, my dear, Dear Love ;—believe me tenderly and sincerely your Eliza."

The narrative which Mrs. Henry Lefanu prepared for Moore's use fails me at this stage, owing to four pages being missing. If they had been preserved, a part of Sheridan's early life might not have been veiled in obscurity so long.

Happily, I have discovered several unpublished letters which compensate for the loss of the missing pages. Sheridan arrived at Waltham Abbey on Thursday, the 27th of August, 1772. On Sunday he wrote to his father at Bath : " I arrived here on Friday evening. I am very snugly situated in the Town ; tho' I should have liked it better, to have been out of it.

" I left you, Sir, at a time when from appearances you had reason to suppose I had not been dealing ingenuously with you. I certainly had in some degree deserved the suspicion ; however some accidental occurrences served greatly to strengthen it. There were circumstances attending that connexion, which you so much wished me to break off, which made it almost impossible to deal with proper candour on all sides ; and I can only re-assure you that what might strongly seem to be a departing from my word, and your injunctions, was, sincerely, and to the best of my Judgement, enter'd on with a view to secure to myself the power of adhering effectually to both for the future. The merit or demerit of my having

so involved myself, is not now a question ; but I can now have no motive in solemnly declaring to you that I have extricated myself, and that on this subject you shall never again have the smallest uneasiness.

“ I intend to call on Mr. Adams to-morrow, when I shall arrange my Studies. I believe the best specimen I can give you of a prospect of my reforming wholly in this point, is to avoid professing anything on the subject. However my next shall furnish you with occasion to give me your sentiments on my Plan. I have here at least one great inducement to study. Nothing else to do. And I doubt not but that a little habit founded even on that, will in no long time counteract the other habit of dissipation, and a habit I must call it, as I still affirm that I very seldom remember to have felt anything like real satisfaction in those Pleasures which constituted it.

“ You desired me to write to you from hence an account of what I owed. They are debts of Folly and Extravagance, some of them contracted later than they should have been, tho’ to get rid of obligations of a former Date. My resolutions on this head I can only date from the time I *left Bath*; as there is no inconvenience of a Debt which I have felt more than the necessity sometimes of adding to it. And had I staid there, while I ow’d a sixpence I believe I should have been incapable of fixing myself to new articles. I expect a letter from Bath, when I will write you an account.

“ I have said that where I have thought myself most obliged, I have felt least capable of shewing it.

I assure you, Sir, it has been so with me in regard to you. I mention this only that you may not think me insensible to what you have done, as Time, not Professions, must shew whether, by profiting by it, I am inclined to repay you.

"I gave Paumier the Copy of my Letter to Capt. Knight for you; if no answer has arrived at Bath, he certainly intends none, in which case I should wish the fact to be mentioned and the Copy shewn. I was thinking of sending another Copy to Mr. Wade, lest they might have suppressed it.

"My Uncle and Aunt are out of Town. I packed up your Comedy by mistake, [and] will send [it by] the first opportunity, with the Op—I left a note at Mr. Horne's for.

"There has been a Grand Contest here between Mr. Parker, and Sir William Wake, assisted by Mr. Berwick; in which Mr. Parker has been quite *the 'Village-Hampden,'* and has met with all the Popular applause of a Wilkes from the Town's-
People, on a decision in his favour at the Sessions. He is just addressing them in a Printed Letter, to which Mrs. Parker has furnished a Latin Motto and many severe strokes against their adversaries. I just came in time to assist at a Board of consultation over the Proof-Sheets. They beg to be remember'd to you. Mrs. Peake and *Miss* send their Compliments to my Sisters. I shall write to them and am your truly affect. and dutiful Son, R. B. SHERIDAN."

On the same day that Sheridan wrote the foregoing letter to his father, he sent the one which follows to his younger sister, Elizabeth.

“DEAR BETSY,—This Letter is wholly *entre nous*, and your Sister if you will. Let me remind you, if you have not done it, to call on Miss D'Oily for my Bill. William I believe will give you one of Mrs. Purdie's. These I shall take care you shall immediately have it in your power to pay for me, as I shall mention it to my Father in my own way. Will you instruct William to prevent Evill's giving his Bill to my Father, as my Note which he has is sufficient, and as my Father will discharge that, there is no occasion for his knowing the Particulars? Likewise let him satisfy Thwaites that he shall be paid for the Pistols, as that shall certainly be in my account to my Father, and, considering circumstances, by no means the most unreasonable. If anything else occurs I must rely on you and Sissy [Alicia Sheridan] to do the best for me and let me know the Particulars. I left my *Arts and Sciences* behind.¹ I have given them to my friend Paumier. I wish you could get them bound, and present them to him; it would not cost above 14 or 16 shillings. I believe I shall remit you some money myself; beside what I mentioned shall be given you by my Father to pay little things which he is not to know, out of which too Mr. Bowers shall be paid.

“By-the-bye I thought Mrs. Bowers seemed more alarmed about the money than was necessary; 'tis all for Flowers, and you may likewise pay her for doing ruffles what she likes. I have wrote to my

¹ The work referred to may have been either “The Complete Dictionary of Arts and Sciences” published in 1768 or “History of the Arts and Sciences” published in 1769.

Father and shall send him the account as soon as ever I hear from Bath. He has promised me to discharge them. And I assure you I am planning Prudence and all the Cardinal Virtues.

"You see this is a mere letter of business for you and your Sister. Never *shew* my Letters to *any one*, you may just tell my Father you have a letter from me. I shall write to Sissy next Post in a [different?] Style. Mrs. and Miss Peake are here. Miss told Mrs. Parker she was glad to hear *I was coming*, for she'd get me to *teach her an almande*. Take care of all the things I left behind me. There is an old Muff which I shall seriously be obliged to you if you will put by for me. Pray write to me directly, and tell Sissy to do so too. How stands the French scheme? Remember me to friends, acquaintances, etc., etc., etc., particularly the Breretonites, Morganites, Walshites, Lynnnites (how like Linnets!) (whom also you must pay), and kindly [remember me?] to your gentle friend La Juliana."

Other letters of great interest from Thomas Grenville to Sheridan were in Moore's hands, but he had reluctantly to renounce his intention of publishing them. He vainly endeavoured to induce Grenville to let him have the letters which Sheridan wrote to him. This correspondence is now at my disposal and I shall quote freely from it.¹

¹ At p. 189 of the second volume of Moore's *Diary*, he writes, on the 13th of May, 1818:—"Received a letter from Mr. T. Grenville, very wordy, and labouring hard at an excuse for not giving me the letters; says they *only* refer to the lady whom he first married. Only! The very thing I want. Have replied to

It opens with a letter from Sheridan to Grenville written at Farm Hill, Waltham Abbey, and dated, as were the letters to his father and sister, the 30th of August, 1772. His punctilious reluctance to associate with Grenville otherwise than on a footing of equality is worthy of note, as it characterized him through life in his relations with those who might have considered themselves his superiors by birth :—" That I write to you by your own desire prevents my making any observations on that kind of sudden intimacy which excuses and demands as familiar an address. While you are no more than you are at present, [that is, no higher in station] I cannot be insincere in declaring how much I *feel* that I wish for your conversation and friendship, that it is even necessary to premise your present situation, is a strong argument in favour of what I once before observed to you, that, had it been greater, I could not have been intimate with you.

"A person of an ingenuous mind, and any true him, and tried by gentle hints to *shame* him into letting me have them ; but it is, I fear, hopeless."

I am under a special obligation to the Baroness Kinloss, who is now the possessor of the palatial mansion of Stowe, for allowing me to search among the manuscripts of her ancestor, Thomas Grenville, which have been preserved, for the letters of Sheridan to him. It was feared that these letters had been destroyed, with many others, in a fire at Moreton Lodge. The result of a careful search, twice renewed and almost abandoned in despair, among papers which were deemed valueless, was the recovery of the packet of twelve letters, in the condition it was left when Thomas Grenville endorsed it, "Letters from Sheridan, 1773," and tied a piece of old-fashioned red tape round it.

spirit may have the most familiar attachment to another though possessed in a superior degree of every natural endowment as well as acquired qualification, but where the accidental advantages of rank and fortune are added to them, I believe it to be impossible. I only mention this in order to stipulate that, as my connexion is with Mr. *Thomas Grenville*, if ever you should by any accident cease to be that gentleman, you must not be surprised if you think our correspondence dissolved.

“At present I have the more opinion of our acquaintance on account of its not being founded on the common principles of time and companionship. And though there was *one* incidental circumstance which served in a manner to bring forth the expression of those mutual feelings by which we knew one another, yet I cannot but flatter myself that some other might have answered the same purpose. As we really find in *love* frequent proofs of what the novelists call a *sudden sympathy*, I confess I have an opinion of the same in *friendship*, and I believe the youngest man's experience will furnish him with instances of his having felt a strong disposition towards a friendship with a man upon the very commencement perhaps of their acquaintance. If it so happens that they are separated soon after, most commonly the acquaintance drops, as the present mode seems to have fixed a probation of time, exchange of services, intercourse at meals, &c., as the necessary foundation of friendship and correspondence. Thus we often hear men regret that some incident should have interrupted their inter-

course with Mr. Such-a-one, before they could grow intimate enough to *correspond*, though they'd exchanged mutual expressions of regard.

"For my part I confess myself an admirer of those times when the ties of *friendship* as well as *love*, could with some safety be formed at the first instigation of our hearts. It is what we call the *civilization* of society that has destroyed this by making a *fashion* of *professions*; and still more the *corruption* that followed it, which has so far blunted all the nobler feelings of man, that the test of time and services is become necessary to *apologize* for any mutual confidence or *disinterested* regard.

"But writing on friendship is not writing to my friend: and considering I own I had apologized for not saying a word on the subject, a double apology is due for the trespass. 'But is there not a subject dearer to you than friendship?' you say. I wish this sigh would let me deny it. I have passed two days here in excessive melancholy: and I am perfectly convinced that that unfortunate being called a lover, if a true one, would better bear a separation from her he loves in a desert than a paradise. Place me in the first and I am surrounded with one plain absolute and evident wretchedness. There is no image round me to remind me of *her*, none which I can join with *her* idea; nay, by Heaven, I should feel supremely happy that she was not there to partake of my hardships. But in the other, when I see a pair blest in peace and in each other, let me say, 'Why am I shut out from this for ever?' and 'tis

torture. Let me sit in a beautiful scene, I exclaim, 'What would her presence make this?' and 'tis worse than a wilderness. Let me hear music and singing, 'I cannot hear her sing and play,' and the notes become the shrieks of the damned. In short with my present feelings I cannot find a place either so perfect or so abominable as not to admit the idea of this torturing comparative improvement.

"I hope you have seen her [Miss Linley], I hope you have talked to her; if you *have*, and should again, I am sure your own feelings will suggest to you what I would say. Tell me she is happy; if she is otherwise tell her to be so. O upon my soul, it were the part of an angel to come down from Heaven, to watch over her, and reconcile her mind to peace. I wish dying could assure me of the power to come from Heaven to her with that happiness which I fear she will never know here. It is impious to say it, but I believe I should exchange a Robe of Glory for *her* Livery.

"Perhaps you will think it well that I did not begin on this subject sooner. When I do I am fit for nothing else. But the bargain was not struck without your knowing of the blemish. Were there any reports about, after I left Bath? I know not whether I am to charge you with compliments, &c., to your brother and Mr. Cleaver. Adieu, Grenville, and believe me, with the truest sincerity and affection, your friend."

The loss of Sheridan's letters to his friend Halhed will be deplored with the greater earnestness by the

readers of the first by him to his friend Thomas Grenville. Thomas Grenville's reply was written at Bath and dated the 4th of September, 1772 :—
 “Dear Sheridan,¹ I well know that your mind was superior to the common prejudices of what is called the *polite world*, who with a cool indifference, prescribe set rules and forms for what should be most free, most unconfined, the attachments of the heart either in love or friendship. I have been frequently blamed by my friends for a warmth of sentiment, which prompts me to follow the first dictates of (I will say) my *feelings*, without a deliberate and calm review of the subject of my pursuit. This *may be* and I believe *is* a good doctrine ; but it suits not with the constitution of my mind, which is highly sensible of what you call in your last, ‘the novelists’ *sudden sympathy*,’ and is flattering enough itself, to seek for and expect a reciprocation of sentiment.

“In this last instance how happily have my expectations been answered ! And how much has it conduced to my satisfaction, that by so kind an example, you have encouraged me to address you as freely as my inclination would prompt me to do ! You again threaten me with the consequences of my growing a greater man. Give me leave to say that if my abilities (allow me the expression) or applica-

¹ All those who are conversant with the discussion as to the authorship of the letters signed Junius must know that the letters sent to Woodfall by Junius are said to have been written by Philip Francis in a feigned hand. The handwriting of Grenville's letters closely resembles that so-called feigned hand ;—yet he was not Junius.

tion ever reach that point, which terms me the great man you would with so much caution avoid ; the illustrious appendages (if any there be) of wealth and greatness, must have some more powerful charm than the pageantry of expense, to recompense me for a loss I should feel with so much regret.

“I have not vanity to suppose myself in a very high situation. I have (if I do not flatter myself) an honest ambition which would assist me to rise in life, but it is so blunted and daunted by the difficulty of the road, and the *high* price which men daily pay for the *honours* they enjoy, that I frequently am tempted to suppose myself a *greater* character, as an honest man in a lower station than I should be in the most *splendid*, which I fear is seldom reached by those (who do not claim it from their birth and rank) with that spotless integrity which it would always be my pride to maintain. I am growing tiresome about my own affairs, therefore no more of them. But thus far I must say that, unless men to a great degree lose that nice sense of honour, by being more conversant in the ways of the world, I shall never rise but by those means which will entitle me to a continuance of your esteem and regard, and you do not look upon me with those favourable sentiments I should wish you to entertain for me, if you think my friendship liable to any alteration by time, place, or situation. Thus much on Friday night too late for the post.

“Saturday morning. The former part of the letter I received yesterday, I read with the greatest pleasure, as the expressions in it (one point ex-

cepted which I fear I have been tedious upon) so entirely accord with my sentiments and wishes ; but the latter is too exact a picture of the distress you now labour under to read over without in great measure participating the melancholy you are affected with. How unfortunately are you situated ! How many tedious hours must you pass in contemplating in idea only those virtues which, by your account, would give the most complete happiness. You hope I have seen her, you hope I have spoken to her. I have not spoken to her, I have seen her but once and that for an instant ; I should now wish to see her, for I am sure my feelings would never suggest to me expressions as agreeable to her in your name, as the last page of your letter. She is gone to Winchester and Gloucester, and she appeared but once since your departure from Bath and then only for a very short time.

“ Believe me it is not the common offer of complaisance when I say it is now my first and principal wish that it were in my power to reconcile your mind to the loss of what you so much regret, or what I fear *is* and *must be* impossible, and make you happy in each other. Why was her fate so cruel as so early in life to bring upon her the imputation and censure of the world ? I say not much on this subject, till I have perused the memoirs you promised [of which nothing is known], yet if the relation of what is passed is uneasy to you let not my curiosity (though laudable in its end as being prompted in the interest I take in your concerns) induce you to give yourself a moment's pain ; and yet the melancholy

account of your time argues *too* strongly the unhappy employment of your thoughts to give room to suppose that any *memento* is wanting on that unfortunate subject.

“I have heard no reports since you left Bath, but that it is thought you are gone to France. Adieu, dear Sheridan; let me entreat you to be calm and compose your mind; let me entreat you for your own sake, for the sake of your friends among whom none stands forth with greater sincerity than yours most affectionately.”

The following letter from Sheridan to Grenville is probably the next in the series; yet, being undated this must remain a matter of conjecture: “But that it would appear too ceremonious, I would begin with apologizing for not writing sooner, but waiving both ceremony and compliment, let me assure you that yours gave me infinite pleasure. It gave me pleasure because it was just such a letter as I *expected* to receive from you. Every confirmation of an agreeable prepossession is a compliment to one’s own penetration,—but I will have done with prologueising for the future.

“I thank you most sincerely for the interest you take in my welfare, I mean in your wishes to recommend to me that tranquility of mind which is indeed the health of the soul, and which ought to be to all a consideration as superior to bodily welfare, as the soul is to the body. But I am afraid their well-being, in a most essential degree, depends on the original construction of our frames. We may diet and exercise the one to its advantage; so may

we cultivate and improve the other : we may proceed by rule to the body's health, but who can ' administer (*sic*) to a mind diseased ?' For my part I take what the world calls *philosophy* to be the arrantest quack of all. And that ' God never made His work for man to mend,' is an observation I would apply not to the body's health, but rather to the mind's.

" For my own part, unless my soul, or mind, or disposition or feeling, or whatever you please to call it, is not made like other people's, I must affirm the truth of this. For I do feel, and have always felt something within that gives a check to my most pleasurable ideas, something that will anticipate exertion, that contradicts my best passions, repines at the enjoyment of them, and cries out *non est tanti!* to every pursuit of my life. I do not say that this principle is always in action, but it is sometimes so ingenious in fixing the most foreign uneasiness on me, that I have almost doubted whether I am not most happy when I have some real trouble of my own, to employ as well as distress the mind. If a man be unhappy, and he can tell you *what* makes him so, in my mind he half deserves to be so. For if his misfortune be without a remedy, let him apply to reason and exercise his understanding, and if he has an object in view (however desperate) he may be comparatively happy in the *pursuit*.

" But what is his state who is unhappy, he knows not *why*, who has *no* pursuit and who, were it possible to bid him name his wish and he should have it, would answer that he wanted nothing. This I say is constitution ; and though I do not say but

that it is to be counteracted, I am yet sure that it is not to be prescribed to. The man, whom the contemplation of *human nature* itself will sometimes throw into a melancholy train of ideas, cannot easily be put into spirits by any accidental gifts of *fortune*. However these sensations are for the most part temporary, and often go to the composition of a cheerful mind on the whole. If I have here seemed to indulge them too far, I can only say that my mind and body are in unison : though, did I pretend to be the least bit of a philosopher, it would be paying a vile compliment to the former, to suppose it liable to so irrational an influence. However the truth is that I have been for this fortnight very much dejected by a violent cold in my head, and latterly confined and in too much pain either to employ or entertain myself. Yet let me not retract the complaints of my despondency, as they at least show that I think an appeal to the sympathizing heart of friendship the best relief for it.

“ You will think perhaps that the fire of *love* is beneath this gloom. To convince you however that *that* is not the cause of these tormenting sensations of which I have been speaking, I will even on the mention of the subject endeavour to shake off these vapours, and try to talk more like a rational being— (without attempting a pun, though possibly that might be one of the best specimens I could give of my intention).

“ Believe me when I am most melancholy, when I am poring over Nature's large volume of affliction, I turn to the page of love (though a blotted one) for

consolation. I find there, it is true, much cause for vexation, but were it a blank to me, I should be ten times more miserable. I am sick and without society ; my love is almost the only feeling I have alive. *Amo ergo sum* is the confirmation of my existence. However, I am afraid I am giving no proof of my rationality on the subject ; yet, of the two, it is better to tire you with nonsense, than complaint. At least I am sure the former will be no tax upon your *sympathy*.

“ But what shall I say of this attachment ? To hope for happiness from it, I must agree with you, *is* and *must* be impossible ! I have received a letter from her, since I wrote to you (contraband !) filled with the violence of affection, and concluded with prayers, commands and entreaties that I should write to her. I did not expect such a desire, as she had acquiesced to my determination of not corresponding. Indeed as we had always other subjects to employ us when together, she hesitated less in agreeing to a distant mortification, and I by that had less necessity to explain properly to her the necessity of it. I cannot now do it ; for to tell her *why* I am right is to plunge into the wrong. To tell her why I did *resolve* is to break my resolution, yet to deny her, and not excuse my denial, is a hard mortification. I am determined *not* to write, not from the conviction of the necessity of such a determination, but I cannot break a solemn promise. How strange is my situation ! If I consult my reason or even one half of my *feelings*, I find conviction that I should wish to end this unfortunate connexion. What draws the

knot, rejects the influence of reason, and has its full moiety of the feelings (dearest, tenderest!) with the passions for its hold. Perhaps, then, it is best that there is an *artificial*, but powerful bond, that keeps me to the other party.

“But, dear Grenville, what shall I say *to you* on this subject? Could I speak on it without interest or emotion I should reap a double advantage. I should obey the dictates of my reason, and I could with *propriety* warn *you* not to indulge a passion which must be equally fatal to you. Yet must I say to you (while *I* love her) love on. Did I not, upon my soul I would turn monitor. Not that I think that at present there is any danger, or that you can hurt yourself, nor would I deprive *myself* of the satisfaction I have in knowing that *she* has a friend, though through love, in the man of my esteem. The feelings arising from such an attachment, in a breast like yours, I am sure cannot be hurtful in their operation. But need I see, that, were I free and saw you advancing towards my present situation, I should try to hold you back as from a precipice. You will say perhaps that I, though *on* the precipice have declared that I turn towards *love* that led me there, as to a pleasant object: 'tis true, but (as I said too) 'tis only when a diseased imagination has conjured up a more dismal prospect on the other side. But I will finish the subject by requesting that, if ever (and you are treading now on the heels of perilous probabilities) you entangle yourself in a love net, you will candidly and freely draw on me for what little experience accident or a few years may

have given me in advantage over you. I would ever wish to prevent my friend from being foiled by a woman, but I would not give a pin for [a] man that was capable of being so. I will resume the subject, if it be only to show that I mean no boast by my offer.

“In regard to the memoirs I must be silent at present; but rest assured that I do neither retract nor repent of my promise. Accuse this cold and toothache. I have had this morning a vile tumour opened in my upper jaw, which pained me horribly and long before I knew what it was. I am now inconceivably better, as you may conceive who are the first victim to my amendment. Adieu, Grenville, but do not retort my delay, or I shall doubly curse the cause of it.”

Sheridan's views of life, expressed in this letter when a young man, tallied, as I shall hereafter show by quotations from other unpublished letters, with those which he held when his experience of life and men was long and large. It is probable that Grenville had written the following letter before receiving that printed above:—“I am forced in great measure to infringe the settled rules and forms of correspondence which in general forbid a second letter, till advice has come of the receipt of the first. But upon *extraordinary* events, these ordinary rules must be dispensed with.

“You receive then this letter to acquaint you of an expedition to Ireland for a fortnight, for which purpose we set out for the Head to-morrow. It is no small disappointment to me, that by this expedi-

tion I lose all hopes of hearing from you for a week at least, and that too when I have been for a few days on the rack of impatience, which I verily believe is one of the most tormenting racks we know,—in England at least; and certainly most so when the object of our expectation is most interesting.

“All this being premised, consider how eagerly I must wait for the fulfilling of your promise; consider I say to let me suppose that I shall see the agreeable effects of those considerations as soon as the Irish Packet will permit. You are doomed then to a solitary voyage to France, as I heard from your sisters, who, I believe much regret this alteration in their winter place of residence. . . . I see one advantage which *may* arise, for the mention of which, however, perhaps you will be tempted to abuse me. I hint at the probability that by new scenes, a change of climate, country and objects, you may forget the unhappy attachment you have made in England; and yet how much pain would such a probability give to *one much* interested in your regards, suffer me then to wish that by ‘the lenient hand of Time,’ a mutual forgetfulness may assuage or put a stop to the many painful hours which mutual attachment has caused in the breasts of two such amiable persons.

“I cannot send you any news concerning her [Miss Linley] for though she has returned from Gloucester a week, I have not been able to see or hear of her, though I have endeavoured to do so. I dread the Oratorio expectations; the theatre and

the company are not calculated for her amusement but how many are there who will think it calculated to promote the most villainous intentions ; for so I must call all which tend only to a selfish gratification at the expence of the fair one's happiness, or which must from the soft-eyed virgin, etc. etc. etc. I must observe how little I tend to promote the *probability* which is to be wished, by writing on this subject, particularly as I have no account to give you of her situation, therefore no more.

"Write to me I beseech you, as I must threaten you with a constant application of expostulatory letters. I have got copies of all your verses, and cannot sufficiently admire them, but as everybody must have a preference, allow me to prefer 'Cherub of Heaven,'¹ the sentiment of that is in my mind superior to any I have seen, and shows in the author

¹ This poem was written, according to Moore, in 1770, soon after the Sheridans had settled in Bath, when Miss Linley had "one of those transient preferences which in early youth are mistaken for love." I give the version which she left in her own handwriting, and in which there are some variations from the printed one :

"Cherub of Heaven ! who from thy secret stand
Dost note the follies of each mortal here,
Oh ! if Emira's steps employ thy hand,
Blot the sad legend with a mortal tear.

"Not, when she errs from passion's wild extreme,
Mark then her course, or heed each trifling wrong ;
Not, when her sad attachment is her theme,
Note down the transports of her erring tongue ;

"But, when she sighs for sorrows not her own,
Let that dear sigh for mercy's call be given ;
And bear that tear to her Creator's throne,
That glistens in the eye upraised to Heaven."

that fixed love and adoration, which it must be the wish of your and her friends by time, absence etc., if possible to remove. Blame me not for speaking so freely, but take it all to yourself, and place it to the account of the letter I received from you which has encouraged me always to give you my real sentiments. I know no direction, therefore enclose to Lord Temple, Stowe, Bucks. He will know where to find us in Ireland. Adieu."

Sheridan replied on the 30th of October, 1772:—"I ought to be ashamed of my tardiness in writing to you, and I can no other way excuse it than by assuring you that I deferred it only to do it with the more satisfaction. I have no greater pleasure than in hearing from and writing to you, and therefore it is that I do not find myself inclined to the latter when my mind is uneasy on any account which would not be alleviated by being communicated. However I believe I may now say that, in all probability, nothing of that kind will ever again cause any omission in me.

"My last was written at a time when, from bodily indisposition, I believe I was inclined to talk too much in a desponding strain. But the gloomy atmosphere of a sick room is a vile medium to view the prospects of life through. All the colours appear deadened and confused to the eye, and every object unsubstantial. But let the sun of health shine forth and—the patient (if he be not aware) shall talk in nonsensical tropes and figures for an hour together. But I assure you that I have now better health and mere animal spirits than I remem-

ber to have had. I keep regular hours, use a great deal of exercise and study very hard. There is a very ingenious man here with whom, besides, I spend two hours every evening, in mathematicks, mensuration, astronomy etc. I purpose likewise to make myself a piece of a sailor, which is the conjurer's forte: this man has a great deal of merit and a wife and family; is very poor and has taught himself everything he knows.

"There is one point you misunderstood me in with regard to perils and probabilities. I did not mean anything as to Miss Linley, nor hint at any peril in particular. I meant only that a young man of a warm constitution, and of a generous temper must in general run some risque, and probably get into some difficulties from his intercourse with women. I do not mean with those of a low kind, for the inconveniences which mere passion brings a man into are what he deserves. I allude only to the embarrassments of the heart, which I believe will always be perilous where there are passions, and at the same time too much delicacy to relish their gratification with prostitutes. It was in this case that I threatened to assume the character of monitor.

"I must repeat again, and once for all, and most sincerely that I turn to nothing with a greater pleasure than to our correspondence, and the idea I have of what our friendship shall be. I never had met with but one person whom I could fix in the character I had formed of friendship. He died; and, in proportion as I grew in acquaintance with

others, my regret for him increased. My early acquaintance with him gave me a delight in the pleasures of friendship, and when I had lost him, the recollection of that delight made me hope that a mind that joyed in it would surely find another object for such an intercourse. But the more (as I said) I got acquaintances, the more I found I should have *acquaintances* only ; and thus my regret for *Forbes* increased, on the same principle as a man newly married would not so much deplore the loss of his new-born child while he hoped that another year would probably supply its place. But let years roll on and bring no appearance of a compensation, with aggravated distress he curses the stroke that robbed him of his first.

“Do not think I mean to compliment when I say that when I was scarce acquainted with you, the feelings of friendship and the passion I had to have a friend (which had long slumbered in me) of themselves revived. My *heart* bid me wish to be your friend before my *judgment* could inform me of your character, and if I did not feel a confidence that I am not mistaken, I would never trust either heart or judgment again. My speaking on this subject in so unfashionable a style, brings to my mind as unfashionable a performance. I mean *Sir Philip Sidney's Arcadia*. If you have not read it (and ever read romances) I wish you would read it. I am sure there is much of it that would charm you. For my own part when I read for entertainment, I had much rather view the characters of life as I would wish they *were* than as they *are* : therefore

I hate novels and love romances. The praise of the **best** of the former, their being *natural*, as it is called, **is** to me their greatest demerit. Thus it is with **F**ielding's, Smollet's, etc. Why should men have a **satisfaction** in viewing only the mean and distorted **figures** of Nature? Though, truly speaking, not of **Nature** but of vicious and corrupt society. **What-**
ever merit the painter may have in his execution, an **honest** mind is disgusted with the design.

“But what made me mention this book was that you will find *friendship* as well as *love* in their own noble forms. If anyone think that the colouring of the former is too high, I deny that he can have a soul for the latter. He that drew them we know had for both. If you read it now you must tell me your opinion of some observations I will make to you.

“If I were to see you I would show you some idle things that I have written. However there is one of a more serious kind which you shall have before I do anything with it. I fancy too I shall speedily be more seriously employed, but of that I will say nothing till I am certain.

“You will observe I have omitted to say anything *de amore aut de Cæciliâ meâ* (*utinam quidam mea esset*!) I have kept absolutely to my resolution. But (from a late accident) I will defer saying more till I see you. What you have said on the subject has the most pleasant consolatory effect on me.

“I will now continue to write to you without waiting even for an answer to convince you of the truth of my former excuse; but I will not admit of excuses on your side: those who fail themselves always exact

the most ; so I shall, notwithstanding, hope that you will retort on me with the spirit of revenge.

“ I hope your brother and Mr. Cleaver are well and that you have all brought home your hearts and senses from the land of beauties and blunders.”

Grenville did not reply to the foregoing letter and on the 10th November, 1772, Sheridan wrote again : “ My dear Grenville, if anything could make me glad at not hearing from you it would be the giving me an opportunity to convince you that I shall never stand upon the ceremony of waiting for an answer. I have a much higher opinion both of the utility and satisfaction of an epistolary correspondence between minds that do in some degree, from Nature or their feelings, correspond, than to confine it merely to the information of one's health, or the most trivial subjects of intelligence.

“ It is a common observation that the greatest excellence of familiar letter-writing consists in an easy and unpremeditated style. Hence it is not unusual for people to boast that they *write* just as in common they *speak*. Now if the correspondence be held between two ignorant and nonsensical coxcombs, they will be perfectly right, as any attempt at anything of thought or observation, will in such appear an awkward and disgusting affectation. But this is also frequent with men of understanding who, to avoid the opposite extreme of a pedantic and sententious style do often labour violently to avoid the appearance of having thought in their letter, and to confine themselves to the most insignificant subjects dressed in the most familiar language.

“ I confess I have always regarded a correspondence of a true kind in a more serious light. I think it is a farce when it is carried on between mere acquaintances. If two men, who fancy themselves united in friendship, have so little serious understanding as never when together to discourse upon any subjects beyond the ordinary topics of chit-chat, they are certainly right at not aiming at more in their letters. But are those who delight in conversation of a more serious and improving nature to give up that satisfaction when they converse in writing, that they may scribble with ease and avoid the imputation of formality? I would have every man *write* to his friend as he would *speak*. Yet not as he would speak to him at a dinner or assembly, but (if he pretends to be a man of sense) as he would speak to him in those uninterrupted, retired hours of mutual confidence and communication in which consist the spirit and enjoyment of friendship. And to such *this* will be to write with *ease*. For I do not recommend any attention in such a correspondence to language or expression. They will be right of course : it will be the language of the heart and the expression of the feelings ; but I would rather court than avoid a train of serious reflection. If such do not pertinently and easily occur, it is better to lay one's head on one's hand to consider on *what* to write, than *how* to express ourselves, and the latter I believe will always be the case when we thwart the bent of our disposition in any conversation. For my own part, that may not seem to discredit my own observations, I shall confess

that I write much more precipitately and triflingly often than I could wish, but it is more from habit and indolence, than that I can approve of it.

“ I should have been running on upon this subject very impertinently, if I had not something in view to introduce by it. You must understand that I have a very high opinion of the *utility* as well as amusement of the friendly intercourse of letters. When there is a mutual confidence and esteem, I am convinced nothing could be made more highly improving. I mean more particularly among young men. Youth rejects, most universally, the experience of men of years ; it is suspicious of their counsels and reserved in its communication with them. But a communication of observations and sentiments, of feeling and perceptions between young men must have a good effect. Though neither may have experience enough to be instructive, yet will the attempt throw the mind of the other into a train that, in the end, will prove so. So that all this preface tends only to this. You must not think me vain or pedantic if in future I often deliver my sentiments to you on some subjects as if I thought I could be of service to you. If you will deal the same with me, you will repay me. Friendship is the most noble of all preceptors : it courts and gives improvement. I can say no more on this subject at present, and it has for this time excluded all others.”

A letter which Grenville had sent has not been preserved. The next from Sheridan to him was addressed from the Bedford Coffee-house, London, on the 17th of November, 1772 : “ By the time you

receive this, you will have received another of mine originally directed to Lord Temple's. I have nothing more to answer in your last than that you may depend on it I will see you at *Oxford* before a month is over. My last contained *nothing*, unless for the future I were to write most extremely seriously. However, this shall be *no* letter. It is merely a few lines written because I feel an inclination to write to you.

"I write now from a coffee-house in *London*, being just come from the play. Whenever I have been at an idle and irrational amusement, whenever I have been in company with acquaintances and companions (that is with fools and coxcombs) I return with the strongest sensations of disgust, and if I have no real friend on whom I can turn my thoughts, I am extremely wretched. If I think that I have, I would seek a solitude to converse with him, though but by a letter. Through this only, I have taken a pen to scribble to you.

"The principles of love are the same. A lover (a true one) shall fly with rapture from the society of courtezans to contemplate but the picture of his mistress. I am interrupted."

Eleven days after this letter was written in London, the following one followed it from Waltham Abbey : — "I ~~was~~ very lately on the point of surprising you with a visit at Oxford ; but I must now defer it for some time, though I believe it shall not be for long. I wrote to you a little while ago a few lines from London, which I did more as an excuse for joining in a company there, than that I intended to say

anything. I intended to say some things on some points in your last ; but I am writing now where I have not your letter : so of that another time.

“I wish you could on any pretence come and spend a fortnight in Essex. You shall hunt and shoot and study in the prettiest rotation imaginable. At night you shall go on stargazing parties, and with ladies too, and conclude the day with wine, and pipes if you choose them. Then will I show you many curious productions ; the abortions of a fantastic or of a melancholy conception. But I fear such a plan is scarcely among possibilities. However, I must stipulate one thing, against the time we are to meet, which is, that you shall advance part of the way from Oxford, and meet me, ‘thy single arm to mine,’ to spend one day uninterrupted before I enter the town.

“I have a great humour to talk about my own affairs. You must know that I have fixed to myself a walk in life for my entrance into which I shall work ‘oar and sail,’ as the Devil did in Milton ; and when I am in, if I can’t make my way on, I shall deserve to be trod on. My plan stands thus. I am studying very hard, and I am determined to gain all the knowledge that I can bring within my reach. I will make myself as much master as I can of French and Italian ; and towards spring I would go to spend the summer in France and according to circumstances see as much abroad as I could. Previous to this I would enter myself at the Temple (which I hope to do before a month is over). Now, I find from a third hand that Lord Townshend has

promised to do something handsome for me immediately. If it should be of such a nature as would rather enable me to pursue than impede the above plan, I shall be extremely happy. But if I am to be sent God knows where in an apprenticeship to some Minister, I shall beg to be excused. Were I once entered for the Bar, I should not care how much I am employed, nor where, during the 5 years previous to practice, as I should dedicate it to study, and look forward to the expiration of that term as to independence. Any employment therefore in England would facilitate my scheme. And I have less opinion of the other, since an instance I have seen here.

"There is a gentleman lately returned from Prussia, where he was Secretary to the Envoy (or Ambassador, I forget which) for more than *twelve* years, in which he acquitted himself so well that the Envoy, who died, left him a legacy with a particular recommendation to the Ministry, notwithstanding which he has not the least prospect of anything and, were it not for the accidental circumstance of the legacy, he would be just where he set out. And this man has very good abilities, and is master of half an hundred languages! I shall make no apology to *you* for having come to the end of my paper with talking about myself. I hope to hear from you soon."

The autobiographical particulars in this letter, like those in preceding ones, are so new and curious that the reader must regret that the sheet of paper was not much larger, yet no one can be sorry that Sheridan's ambition to enter the diplomatic service was frustrated. He would have made as genial an Amba-

sador as Prior, yet the stage and Parliament would have lost what was immeasurably superior to the most noteworthy diplomatic triumph. That his mind was soon diverted into an old channel is shown in the following letter written on the 8th of December, 1772 :—"I cannot forbear writing you a line or two, though it be only to endeavour to throw off some little particle of the strongest chagrin, distress, astonishment, indignation and I know not what.

"I have this day had an account of the basest, meanest, and most ungrateful piece of treachery that ever disgraced human nature. *Mathews* has come to Bath and, bullying *Paumier* [the second to Sheridan in his last duel] by attempting to call him out, has made him sign some infamous falsehoods, which I am told are credited, and I am ——— such friendship! But I hope you will suppose I shall not betray myself.

"I wait for the post from Bath, when I shall seek the bottom of this treachery and if I do not revenge it, may I live to *deserve* it. By way of consolation I find added to this account that *your friend*, Sir T. Clarges, is either going to be married to, or to run away with Miss L[inley].

"Excuse this vile disjointed scrawl. I have been writing letters these three hours, and I am bribing the postman to wait for this. Let me have a line from you of any kind (directed to me at the Bedford Coffee-house, Covent Garden, London) immediately on the receipt of this, or I shall be in the midst of this precious business.

"I know not what I write, for upon my soul I believe

I am distracted as [*sic*] greatly I think I am injured. Let what will happen, may all good attend you."

This is Grenville's reply which, judging from the handwriting, he penned in great haste and under the influence of strong feeling :—" I have just received your letter and have scarce time to write a syllable. For God's sake suffer not yourself to be too much enraged. Remember what you have protested a hundred times that no temptation should make you engage with Mathews ; remember his former behaviour and defend yourself as from a ——. I scarce know what to say to you nor have I time to consider. Proceed only on sure grounds and remember that your opponent has nothing on his side to lose ; you a hundred and a hundred again. For God's sake let no insult or no provocation make you draw your sword against such a —— ; but endeavour by peaceable methods to trace out the affair, before you take any material step. I shall not have rest till I hear from you. For God's sake take care of yourself ; you are never safe from ——. Good God ! that I cannot come myself. I will write again."

"I have seen Sir T. Clarges who is at Oxon. I have talked with him upon the subject. He wonders at the report, [that he was engaged to Miss Linley] denies it totally and goes abroad in a week's time.¹ Remember your opponent a ——. Your honour will sufficiently appear without re-

¹ In a letter from Miss Linley to Sheridan she writes that she "had refused Sir T. C." before leaving Bath. Sir Thomas may have desired it to be supposed there was no truth in the report that he proposed, when it was the fact that he had been rejected.

curring to that. If you have a moment, write : the post is here."¹

Though undated, the following note appears to be the next which Sheridan sent :—" Mr. Thornbery, who is to convey this, is now waiting for it. So I write this only to beg a line from you immediately to know what your stay is at Oxford, as I could now very conveniently come and spend a day with you.

" My letters from Bath, though they do not clear up the affair, yet I believe that the representation I had given me was highly exaggerated and malicious. P[aumier] swears he is innocent. Yours I confess made me happy in one point, but of that hereafter." On the 19th of December, 1772, he wrote again : " I expected to receive your last at the Bedford. And I have this moment had it brought to me from Waltham. The time of my writing this, as it pleads the inexpediency of my seeing you at Oxford, prevents even my writing more at present than to inform you of my disappointment. I must sit down and write Hymns to Patience. I shall direct my next to Stowe ; but if you have half an hour before you leave Oxford, you will oblige me much by informing [me] of the circumstances which you declined to trust to in your last. By that time I

¹ The other letters which Grenville sent to Sheridan in 1772 and 1773 are missing. He was a most estimable young man. Sheridan's sister Elizabeth wrote about him to her sister Alicia in these words, on the 29th of March, 1788 : " T. Grenville is an angel on earth. His behaviour on this occasion [during the illness of Sir Watkin Williams, who had married his sister] is indeed very unlike most young men of fashion."

believe I shall be [able] to write with some degree of information on that subject. At present I am far from being satisfied with particulars, though I have had many letters from Bath."

On the 4th of January, 1773, Sheridan reverts to what had occurred at Bath, and he next gives such an account of his aspirations and views as renders this letter equal in autobiographical interest to some of the others. Indeed, all his early letters to Grenville are a distinct revelation of him as a young man when his character was yet in its formative stage. He says:—"I am still very uncertain [about the late affair at Bath] and am really so much disgusted with the whole set of them on both sides, that I believe I shall grow very indifferent about their machinations. I expect an answer, with a copy of the papers in his hands, every day from Wade [the Master of Ceremonies], till then I shall take no further step in the matter.

"I have written for the last time to Paumier in such a manner as, if he has the smallest pretence to honour or feeling, will punish him sufficiently for his present mean sacrifice of both. I shall really be ashamed to mention anything of this affair to my father, who so often prophesied to me that this would be my return for having so strenuously endeavoured to screen Paumier, and for his sake to prevent the intended publication of the transaction. I have received a letter from this hero, full of those equivocal excuses and self-sufficient assertions which always betray a consciousness of demerit. G. Brereton, I am told, behaved very well in the affair

and, while he was at Bath, made P[aumier] do so too ; but let them go——

“ I never now reflect on that place, but it puts me out of sorts for writing on other matters ; though I do believe I may now say that it can scarcely furnish me with an agreeable subject, even to think on. However, I can find relief from most things in study, and while the mind is seriously employed, we grow inattentive to the peevish interruptions of the feelings and the passions.

“ It has been an everlasting fashion to declaim against the pursuits of ambition, and the expectation of happiness in the scenes of public life. Yet may we not with some justice attempt to prove, that there is to be found there a surer foundation to build on, than in any, the most captivating roads of private, and comparatively private, enjoyments.—Envy is the attendant on greatness.—A Prince's smiles are not to be depended on.—The association of men in power is full of jealousy and distrust.—The voice of the people is inconstant.—True. But does malice never reach a private station ? Are the smiles of friendship never deceitful. Do we never meet with ill-will from our companions, and does the syren voice of love never turn to discord or court other auditors ?

“ Yet, let me suppose a man possessed of everything that can endear a private station. A woman loving him as much as soul could love her ; a friend who was to him as himself ; a moderate and valuable society and a fortune to furnish the luxuries of study and the gratifications of benevolence. Yet to

minds of a certain tone, I can conceive that there is one reflection which would embitter this cup of joy while at our lips ; and the completion of which in a single instance would snatch it irrevocably from our hands. A man in such a retirement rests his happiness on persons not things. Of all others, he is least happy in principle or from within himself. Let his mistress or his friend die, or let him fear they will, or that they may change, and he is at once completely miserable. The calm and secluded mode of his living, which formed one of its chief comforts, must in that case be one of the chief causes of his extreme disgust. His feelings unexercised by sorrow, or even by the contemplation of it, will be torn to pieces by the first attack. While the strings that sounded to the harmony of his soul, being known to the touch of so few hands, will never more make but discord, when they are cold :—

‘ Ask the fond youth

Why the cold urn of her whom long he loved,
So often fills his arms !’

“ Could our natural stock of benevolence be intended to be thus circumscribed ? Was it meant that we should shrink from the active principles of virtue and consequently of true happiness and indolently insure them both on others’ lives ? Nor can such a life be the sphere of true benevolence. He who retires to solitude (unless convinced that he is fit for no other station) and thinks that he does much in relieving the few objects of distress that groan within his hearing, does really but gratify

himself in removing what must annoy him, on the same principle that he does dunghills or ruins. True ambition can never be disappointed ; it hopes most when most oppressed, and the very scene which presents it with its misfortunes, denies it time to feel, or opportunity to indulge them. Then its object is as immortal as the source of it. Our enjoyments here will ever depend upon ourselves, and our own abilities ; in the other they can exist but on the verge of accident, and others' caprice. Death cannot touch the object of the one. The other must live a slave to the dread of his dart.

"In short — — I am to be entered next week in the Temple, (which I take to be the great gate of power) and I am at present much disposed to say 'Hence, idle joys,' to everything but study and the pursuits of business. I find what led me into these pages was an intention to apologize to you for breaking off at the second. However, as you are to enter the same gate, I hope you will not insist on my retracting what I have said, let [it] be ever so inconclusive, and perhaps unintelligible. I must observe to you though here, that were I as you are I should endeavour to enter at one of the Inns [of Court] as soon [as] possible, as there are 5 years allowed to keep the terms in it can be of no disadvantage ; and may save time hereafter, without preventing your pursuing anything else for the present.

"Adieu, dear Grenville. I shall expect to hear soon from you and much too, and when you return to Oxford, I will fix a time for seeing you *sans* fail."

The last of the letters written by Sheridan to Grenville during his sojourn at Farm Hill, Waltham Abbey, is dated the 24th of February, 1773:—"I am very much ashamed of the neglect with which the Post Office between Waltham and Oxford is conducted; but I must confess that I was not sorry to find that you had observed it so much as to inform me of it. The purpose of my delay was at first only to ensure my letters finding you at Oxford, and I really did not think so much time had elapsed; but as I had said in my last that I thought in a week to have been entered at the Middle Temple, the point which delayed that, likewise made me defer writing to you till it should be accomplished. However, as I am afraid you will not admit of this as an excuse, I will procrastinate no longer though I am not certain but that my plea still continues.

"My father had at one time, I believe, absolutely changed his intentions with regard to my following the law and my not hearing from him on the subject occasioned me the highest chagrin: however it is now once more fixed and I hope this week to put my name in the Books. He has likewise changed his idea of my passing the summer in France, yet at the same time proposes to me that I should retire a few hundred miles northward on a party with Messrs. Coke, Blackstone and Co. Had he pursued this notion as expeditiously as I expected, I should not have been altogether at a loss to account for it, as I conceived that it might have originated from his apprehension that all the counties in the neighbourhood of London were within the magic

circle of a certain formidable enchantress, who was to keep her Lent there, or else that he feared some revival of my dispute with M[athews] or his party. But as he is convinced of my peaceable disposition with regard to the latter point, and has not been alert enough to prevent the effects which might have followed the near approach of this charmer, I have some reason to suppose he has re-altered his mind.

“But it is a matter of little moment to me, as I can sincerely say that it is very indifferent to me what the latitude of the spot of ground is where I am to eat, drink, and sleep. My sole idea is to qualify myself so that it shall not be indifferent to the place where I hope to do something more. And, apropos to this I intended to have made a violent reply to some passages in your last wherein you talk most profanely of *certain spheres in which God has placed us*. I shall one of these days learnedly confute the idea that God could ever have intended individuals to fill up any particular stations in which accidents of birth or fortune may have flung them. The track of a comet is as regular to the eye of God as the orbit of a planet. *The station* in which it has *pleased God* to place us, (or whatever the words are) is not properly interpreted. And as God very often pleases to let down great folks from the elevated stations which they might claim as their birthright, there can be no reason for us to suppose that He does not mean the others to ascend &c. &c.

“My father informs me that all Lord Townshend's fine promises are come to nothing. I have placed him down in one of my very dark-brown

books, for there was something very cruel in the manner in which he has (unsolicited) raised my father's expectations, and employed his time and attention, as if he sought a pleasure in wantonly disappointing one whom he had made his sanguine applauder.

"Eliza [Linley] is within an hour's ride of me, and must have been for some time, yet, upon my honour, I have and do industriously avoid knowing the particular place that is blest with her inhabiting. I was obliged to go to London the other day, and I protest to you, no country girl passing alone through a Church-yard at midnight, ever dreaded more the appearance of a ghost than I did to encounter this (for once I'll say) *terrestrial* being. But I cannot say anything on this subject on paper.

"As I am daily in expectation of a commission to sally forth in quest of adventures, I must again observe it would give me the highest satisfaction to spend—if it were only—a few hours with you. If I am bound northward I shall appoint a place within some 12 or 20 miles of Oxford for a *Congress*, on which I beg your sentiments. It will vex me highly to go far off for any length of time without holding a *talk* with you, and though I flatter myself you will continue to correspond with me, yet have we conversed so little *vivâ voce*, that I shall fancy I am hearing from a friend in the Shades and think ours like *The Letters from the Dead to the Living*. But at all events, never let any seeming omission of mine prevent your continuing to hold me as one who is and I hope ever will be your true and sincere friend."

Sheridan's son, Charles, wrote : " There were six copybooks, each filled with notes and references to mathematics, geography, history, Latin and other studies carefully written by Mr. S. at an early age,"¹ during his sojourn at Waltham Abbey. Though studying hard while there, his mind sometimes turned to thoughts of love which had not always Miss Linley for their object. Considering herself aggrieved, she wrote to him in terms very different from those contained in the letters that I have quoted. What follows is taken from one in her handwriting, but there is no indication when or where it was written :—" I have been deceived so grossly by you and by every one that it has almost deprived me of my reason, but I have paid too, too dear for my experience ever to put [it] in your power, or anyone's to impose on me again. I did not expect you would attempt to vindicate your conduct. You cannot to me. Think ! oh ! reflect one moment on what I have suffered, and then judge if I can again consent to risk my life and happiness. For God's sake S——n, do not endeavour to plunge me again into misery. Consider the situation I am in. Con-

¹ These words are taken from a manuscript note written by Charles Brinsley Sheridan on the margin of Moore's "Memoirs" of his father, opposite to the passage at p. 4 of the quarto edition, where Moore styles the contents of the books "the desultory efforts of a later period of his life, to recover the loss of that first precious time, whose susceptibility of instruction, as well as of pleasure, never comes again." This clumsily expressed passage would not have appeared if Moore had known that Sheridan was quite as industrious as he was himself in the "first precious time" of his life.

sider how much your persisting to refuse my letters will distress me. Reason, honour everything forbids it. This is not a sudden resolution, but the consequence of cool deliberate reflection. You are sensible it is not from caprice, but when I tell you I have lately had some conversation with Mrs. L[yster?] and Miss C——y, you will not suppose I will be again deceived. Farewell! If you value my peace of mind return my letters."

Another and much longer letter in the same strain was written soon after wherein the persons designated Mrs. L. and Miss C. were again referred to. Perhaps Miss C. is the lady of whom Miss Linley said in a previous letter:—"How could you tease me about Miss C.? Indeed, my love, if you believe her you will hurt me very much, as I give you my word and honour I never gave her the least reason to think that you was of the least consequence with me more than as a friend."¹

She now writes:—"Do not think I have been influenced by Mrs. L. or Miss C.; 'tis true I have had some conversation with them both. Mrs. L[yster]'s assurance led her to suppose that she could make me believe she was entirely innocent in regard to you, and that she never entertained a thought of you but as a friend. I was a good deal surprised at her endeavouring to vindicate her conduct to me, but her behaviour only heightened the contempt I before felt of her; Miss C. I own I pity. Why do you abuse her, what have you to alledge against her? If she was hurried on by the violence of her love for

¹ See *ante*, p. 211.

you to the commission of a crime, she has since repented. Surely the remorse, the anguish which she feels hourly joined to the opinion she is sensible you entertain of her, is punishment sufficient."

Both Mrs. L. and Miss C. appear to have interrupted the course of the true love between Miss Linley and Sheridan which, till they interfered, had encountered no other obstacle than the opposition from their fathers. The greater the dislike of parents to the wedding of a young man and maid, the more determined do both become to marry and enjoy the happiness which, as they fancy, will end only with their lives. But when female friends interfere on either side, then jealousy rears its yellow crest, quarrels occur, strong words are written or spoken, estrangement ensues and ardent lovers are transformed into ardent enemies. In the present case Mrs. L. and Miss C. had succeeded in making Miss Linley very unhappy, with the result of her writing this letter in which her affection for Sheridan is strangely commingled with protests against his conduct and vehement asseverations that she never could become his wife. A curious letter from Mrs. Mary Lyster to Sheridan has been preserved in which she tells him that her husband's affections had been lost owing to a letter which he had received from "some good-minded woman," that James Alen is now "her only protector" and requests him to do or say something, which is left unspecified, to satisfy this James Alen. I gather from incidental references that Mrs. Lyster was the wife of a medical man at Waltham Abbey. In one of her letters she

exclaims :—"Would that I had taken a flight from this during your stay! It would have saved me much pain and by it I should have escaped the jealousy of your best-beloved."

While writing under the influence of what Mrs. L. and Miss C. had told her, Miss Linley makes an interesting reference to her feelings at the time that she quitted Bath for France under Sheridan's escort, which demonstrates that, during the expedition, he had behaved in a manner for which his father did not give him credit. "You are sensible," she says, "when I left Bath [for France] I had not an idea of you but as a friend. It was not your person that gained my affection. No, S——n, it was that delicacy, that tender compassion, that interest which you seemed to take in my welfare, that were the motives which induced me to love you." She makes an appeal to him, resembling that in the letter last quoted, for the return of her letters, and the words which I am about to add make it clear that he had replied and stated the condition on which he would comply with her request :—"You say you will not give them up till I declare I love another man. Do not distress me so much as to continue in that resolution. Believe me I am incapable of loving any man. They cannot be of any use to you. Do not think I shall alter my resolution, or that I am to be terrified by your threats. I will not think so basely of your principles as to suppose you meant anything by them. There are insurmountable obstacles to prevent our ever being united, even supposing I could be induced again to believe you.

"I did not think to have told you of a great one, but I must, or you will not be convinced that I am in earnest. Know then, that before I left Bath, after I had refused Sir T[homas] C[larges] and other gentlemen of fortune, on your account, who I found had given up all thought of me, in the anguish of my soul which was torn with all the agonies of remorse and rage, I vowed in the most solemn manner upon my knees, before my parents, that I never would be yours, by my own consent, let what would be the consequence. My father took advantage of my distress, and by upbraidings, mixed with persuasions, prevailed on me to promise that I would marry the first man (whose character was unexceptionable) that offered. I repented that I had made this promise afterwards, for though I resolved never to be yours I had not the least intention to be another's. I comforted myself with thinking I should not be solicited, but I was deceived.

"My father, before we left Bath, received proposals for me from a gentleman in London, which he insisted on my accepting. I endeavoured to evade his earnest request, but he urged my promise in such a manner that I could not refuse to see him (at least). He has visited me two or three times since we have been here. He is not a young man, but I believe a worthy one. When I found my father so resolute, I resolved to acquaint the gentleman with every circumstance of my life. I did, and instead of inducing him to give me up he is now more earnest than ever. I have declared it is not possible for me to love him, but he says he will

depend on my generosity,—in short there is nothing I have not done to persuade him to leave me, but in vain. He has promised my father not to take my fortune, and you may be assured this circumstance will have great weight with him. You see how I am situated. If this was not the case I could never be your wife—therefore once more I conjure you to leave me and cease persecuting me.

"My father has this minute left me. He knows I am writing to you, and it was with the greatest difficulty I pacified him. He was going immediately to your lodgings. He has given strict orders to Hannah to bring every letter to him. You will make me eternally miserable if you persist, after what I have told you. Be assured I will not open any letter of yours nor will I write again. If you wish me to think my happiness is dear to you, return my letters. If not, I cannot compel you, but I hope your generosity will not permit you to make an improper use of them. For God's sake write no more. I tremble at the consequences."

Miss Linley is an object of sympathy at this crisis in her career. Her parents had not been kind to her; yet she was the principal bread-winner of the family. She had been subjected to dastardly persecution from Mathews, and she had found in the young and chivalrous Sheridan a truer champion than her father. It would have been very strange if his conduct had not aroused affection in her breast, while it would have been contrary to human nature if the jealousy which Mrs. L. and Miss C. kindled and fanned had not burst into flame and fury. Yet,

while writing in the strongest terms that she never could be Sheridan's wife, she was quite as emphatic in protesting her inability to marry another and the woman who writes in this wise, to the man she once loved, is far removed from disliking him. As Mr. Thomas Hardy has wisely said : " Not the lovers who part in passion, but the lovers who part in friendship, are those who most frequently part for ever."

On the 16th of March, 1773, Mr. Sheridan wrote from Dublin to his son Charles, who had been appointed Secretary to the Embassy at Stockholm, and said : " Your brother is at present at Waltham Abbey, but preparing to set out for Yorkshire upon a proposal of his own. He has pressed so earnestly to have his name entered in the Temple, and has given such solemn assurances of his determined application to the study of the law, that I have at last consented to it."

From the foregoing narrative, which is based upon every accessible document, it is obvious that a serious breach had occurred between the young couple. Where they lived when Miss Linley wrote the last indignant letter from which I have quoted cannot now be determined. The reference to him in a letter from his father runs that he was about to visit Yorkshire " upon a proposal of his own." Yorkshire was the original home of the Linley family. Both he and Miss Linley must have been near each other when she wrote her harrowing tale of grievances, because, at the close, she states that her father was about to call at Sheridan's lodgings. These are all the facts which are now ascertainable.

The missing pages of Mrs. Henry Lefanu's narrative may have contained the information which made Moore write that "there was a serious misunderstanding" between Miss Linley and Sheridan and that his young friend Ewart, who had followed his example in eloping to France with a girl to whom he was attached, had returned and effected a reconciliation between them, and that, "after a series of stratagems and scenes, which convinced Mr. Linley that it was impossible much longer to keep them asunder, he consented to their union."

In the absence of documentary evidence I shall resort to a hypothesis for the explanation of a simple fact. Those who have read the letters from Miss Linley, in which she pathetically states her feelings and position and makes it clear how tyrannically she was treated by her father, will naturally ask why he should have consented to the marriage of his daughter to Sheridan after compelling her to declare in the most solemn manner that she would never become his wife.

If certain papers had not been destroyed, or abstracted from the family records, the answer would have been easy. The fair inference from what I have quoted may thus be drawn. Miss Linley wrote to Sheridan, soon after his second duel, that her father had received a note from him of which he says it "is of no use to him because you are under age."¹ When distracted with the tales of Mrs. Lyster, she wrote that her father had said "he would sooner follow me to the grave than see me married to you as you

¹ See *ante*, p. 207.

would ruin me and yourself by your extravagance." When forced by a harsh father to make a declaration against her will, she informed Sheridan that the suitor who found favour in her father's eyes, "had promised him not to take my fortune," and she adds, what a denser man than Sheridan was not likely to overlook, "and you may be assured this circumstance will have great weight with him."

Mr. Linley does not appear to have opposed his daughter's marriage to a rich man, but he may have been reluctant to her becoming the wife of a poor one who would insist upon receiving the three thousand pounds which Mr. Long had settled upon her. Besides, he felt that in parting with her he would lose a source of income. That he was mercenary in his views is indisputable. Both Garrick and Colman made overtures to him for her services as an actress. He replied to Colman in these terms: "I think, as she has acquired a reputation, I ought to have the advantage of her first performing in London myself. . . .

"Were I properly settled in London, I think I could conduct the business of oratorios regularly; therefore I do not relish giving the prime of my daughter's performance to support the schemes of others. Still, as you are so earnest, I would take two hundred guineas and a clear benefit, with the choice of oratorios. In regard to her engaging as an actress, I shall never do that, unless it were to ensure to myself and family a solid settlement by being admitted to purchase a share in the Patent on reasonable terms, or something adequate to this;

either of which I see no possibility of obtaining ; and I shall never lay myself at the mercy of my children, especially when their power of being of service to me depends so entirely on chance."¹

The note written by Sheridan to Mr. Linley, which had been styled not binding because he was under age, may have contained an undertaking against calling upon Mr. Linley to pay over the whole of his daughter's fortune. After attaining his majority, Sheridan may have renewed the offer, and Mr. Linley may then have consented to his daughter's marriage with him. This supposition tallies with Moore's statement, "that a part of the sum which Mr. Long had settled upon Miss Linley" constituted all his available resources immediately after marriage.

What happened subsequently is that on the 6th of April, 1773, Sheridan became a member of the Middle Temple. In the Record of Admissions he is described as "the second son of Thomas Sheridan, of Dublin, Esquire."² Seven days afterwards, he was united in the bonds of Holy Matrimony to Elizabeth Ann Linley. At the same time and place, his friend Ewart had the informal ceremony of his marriage in France rendered valid in England.

Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan went to pass their honeymoon at East Burnham. He was then in his twenty-third and she was in her twentieth year. Their names were familiar to the public ; but he did

¹ "Lives of the Sheridans," by Percy Fitzgerald, vol. i., p. 82.

² Moore is mistaken when he writes that Sheridan became a student at the Middle Temple "a few weeks previous to his marriage." "Memoirs" of Sheridan, vol. i., p. 114.

not then enjoy the reputation for exceptional merit which she had won. Her voice and features had an indescribable charm. Horace Walpole, who was not easily pleased, ranked her above all the beauties of her day. The King, who was a better judge of music than anything else, was enchanted with her singing. Early in April, 1773, she had sung before the King and Queen at Buckingham House and the King told her father that he had never heard such a voice as hers.¹ She possessed a refinement, how-

¹ *The Bath Chronicle* for the 15th of April, 1773, contains the following communication from London, written on the 10th:—"Yesterday se'nnight Mr. Linley, his son, and eldest daughter, were at the Queen's concert at Buckingham House, Miss Mary Linley being ill could not attend. The King and Queen were particularly affable; his Majesty told Mr. Linley that he never in his life heard so fine a voice as his daughter's, nor one so well instructed; that she was a great credit to him, and presented him with a £100 bank note. No one attended the concert but their Majesties, the children, and one lady. It continued five hours, yet no one sat, except the two performers who played on the harpsichord and violoncello." In a supplement given with the same number of *The Chronicle* the following lines, addressed to Miss Linley by Lord M., are printed:

"Yes, my fair, to thee belong
All the noblest powers of song.
Trust me, for I scorn deceit,
Nought on earth is half so sweet
As the melting, dying note,
Warbling through thy liquid throat;
Save the breath in which it flows,
Save the lips on which it grows."

Another anonymous admirer had addressed an ode to her, the year before, in which these lines occur:

"Loveliest maid that ever sung
As Venus fair, as Hebe young."

ever, which is as rare as her voice. She shrank with innate and unaffected modesty from appearing before a miscellaneous audience ; the homage and hearty applause of a crowded concert-room gave her no pleasure, while the money gained by the exercise of her talents she accounted ill-gotten. Her extraordinary sensitiveness and delicacy of feeling appeared unaccountable to her contemporaries. Sheridan alone thoroughly understood and sympathized with her. She would have made a sacrifice even of her sentiments to give him pleasure and to acquire wealth for his sake ; but he grandly scorned in his poverty to revel in idle luxury upon the large income which his wife could easily have earned. The cynics of his day considered him Quixotic. Dr. Johnson honoured himself by eulogizing Sheridan for withdrawing his wife from a profession in which she appeared with unrivalled brilliancy, and confining the display of her talents to a private circle.¹

Sheridan and Miss Linley had finally joined hands, the romance of their protracted and adventurous wooing appropriately ending in marriage. This incident was a turning point in their existence. At the outset, their new life was idyllic. Two hearts beating as one cannot be matched as a delightful example of concord and unity, while it

¹ A pure invention of Dr. Watkins's is the statement that Mrs. Sheridan's friends resented "as an act of severity and insult," his refusal to allow his wife to sing, and that "she earnestly entreated her husband to relax from his opposition."—"Memoirs of Sheridan," vol. i., p. 195.

may be assumed to be a blissful sensation as well as a divine harmony, reproducing among mortals the fabled music of the spheres. Yet the loving couple who have taken no thought for the morrow may be rudely awakened from heavenly dreams, and startled at the appearance of menacing obstacles in the road which they are to tread in concert.

Sheridan and Miss Linley had little apprehension about what might happen after their joint existence began. He was highly elated as the husband of an adorable wife, and well equipped for journeying with her through the sands of time. He had been endowed, not only with a quick and comprehensive intellect, but also with a dauntless spirit and a merry heart : his courage rose in the face of difficulties ; he never feared failure and when it came he was neither downcast nor baffled. If he could have dipped into the future his mood would have been even blither, for he would have had the vision of becoming the progenitor of a noble race. It is probable that he was the recipient of many compliments on his marriage ; but none who abounded in sympathy and kindly wishes for his welfare could have uttered or written more appropriate and significant words than this sentence in one of the letters which I have quoted from his friend Lewis Ker : " May you live happy in placing your happiness in nothing which is out of your power ; but, ruling your appetites and commanding your passions, may you never want anything really necessary."



THE LIFE OF JOHN BENTLEY, ESQ.

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VII.

MARRIED AND UNSETTLED.

LOVE in a cottage was thoroughly enjoyed by Sheridan, while his young wife was delighted with her husband and her new home ; both of them were happier at East Burnham than afterwards and elsewhere ; indeed, they often sighed in the succeeding years, when both were famous, for a return of the golden hours in the morning of their wedded life.¹ Though inexperienced housekeepers, they quickly accommodated themselves to their new position. Neither of them had anticipated becoming an exception to the rule that love flies out of the window when poverty comes in at the door. The chief problem which Sheridan had to solve was how to keep at a convenient distance the gaunt wolf in which gnawing hunger is symbolized. His means were

¹ In a letter to her friend, Mrs. Stratford Canning, written on the 6th of August, 1782, Mrs. Sheridan says : " We visited our old house at East Burnham the other day, and I wished for you to keep me in countenance. I piped so pitifully at the sight of all my old haunts in the days of happiness, innocence and eighteen." My cordial thanks are due to Mr. A. J. Butler, the great-grandson of Mrs. Canning, for allowing me to make extracts from this letter and from others by Mrs. Sheridan.

more limited than his wants, and his hopes could not be converted into cash. It was imperative for him to gain money to replace what had to be taken from the common and narrow purse, and Sheridan was eager to do so in any honourable way. He had not been an idler. He had egregiously failed to reap substantial profit from his exertions, yet he retained his youthful ardour and belief in himself.

No picture of Sheridan's life immediately after marriage could be faithfully drawn by any other hand than his own and, among the letters which his friend Thomas Grenville preserved, there is one written to him on the 14th of May, 1773, in which details that will interest every reader are set forth :—" My dear Tom, I know not whether you will reckon me tardy in writing to you, or accuse yourself of some little delay in not having written to me. Were I to plead the seducing avocations of what folks call the honeymoon, perhaps you would seize the same plea, and say that you imagined that even the voice of friendship would sound ungrateful were it to intrude upon that ambrosial month of love. But as I am now four days gone in a simple twelfth part of a year, I give up all excuse myself, and demand the same of you. You must not conclude from this that this moon sheds less honey on me than the last ; yet I would never wish my love to have his wings so clogged with sweets but that I could borrow one quill from them for the service of friendship. Were I to venture this style much longer I am afraid that you would think the moon had another more serious effect upon married men.

“To write then like a married man, I should inform you that I have for some time been fixed in a grand little mansion situate at a place called *East Burnham* about two miles and a half from Salt Hill, which, as an Etonian, you must be acquainted with. Had I hunted five years, I don't believe I could have hit on a place more to my mind, or more adapted to my present situation: were I in a descriptive vein I would draw you some of the prettiest scenes imaginable: I likewise waive the opportunity of displaying the rational and delightful scheme on which our hours proceed.

“On the whole I will assure you, as I believe it will give you more pleasure, that I feel myself absolutely and perfectly happy. As for the little clouds which the peering eye of prudence would descry to be gathering against the progress of the scene, I have a consoling Cherub that whispers me, that before they can threaten an adverse shower, a slight gale or two of fortune will disperse them. But when a man's married, 'tis time he should leave off speaking in metaphor. If I thought it would be entertaining to you, I would send you an account of the arrangements of my household which I assure [you] is conducted quite in the manner of plain mortals, with all due attention to the bread and cheese feelings. I have laid aside my design of turning Cupid into a turnspit wheel, and my meat undergoes the indignity of a cook's handling. I have even been so far diffident of my wife's musical abilities as to have carrots and cabbages put into the garden-ground: and finding that whatever effect

her voice might have upon the sheep on the Common, the mutton still obstinately continued stationary at the butchers, I have deigned to become indebted to the brute's abilities. My paper puts me in mind to conclude for the present. I must hint, though, that I am now considerably advanced on the road to Oxford, and if we don't meet soon I shall say with Falstaff, you're not the man I took thee for."

Mr. Linley's opposition to Sheridan marrying his eldest daughter was exchanged for warm affection after Sheridan had become his son-in-law.¹ He visited the happy pair at East Burnham, and wrote from Bath on the 26th of June: "I could find nothing to give me pleasure [during the return journey] but the reflexion of the happy hours I had so lately passed both with you and Betsy." He added: "Do, dear Sheridan, give young master [Tom Linley] a little wholesome advice."

Sheridan's head seethed with literary projects since he had realized that he must be self-reliant. When still a lad he had planned a volume of tales, aided his friend Halhed in preparing an English version of *Aristanetus*, and adapted for the stage a farce of which Halhed sketched the outline.

His cleverness as a versifier had been acknowledged and rewarded by the Bath public, and he had hoped, in addition, to have the success

¹ His own implacable father wrote to Charles Francis seven days after Sheridan's marriage: "I consider myself now as having no other son but you. . . . Your sisters, too, know of no other brother, and would therefore naturally expect an increase of attention."

of Steele or Addison as the founder of a periodical. I now add that he had been afflicted with the craze, which raged in his lifetime and prevails even at the present day, for saving the nation from impending and imaginary ruin by abusing Ministers of State in the newspapers. Both Chatterton and he were engaged at the same time of the year in producing columns of futile declamation after the manner of Junius. In Sheridan's day, unpaid and enthusiastic writers filled much space in the Press with denunciations of public men whom they disliked. At present, able editors can command, for an adequate consideration, the pens of scholarly contributors to discuss, without unaccountable passion or prejudice, the questions and persons of the hour. A writer in *The Public Advertiser* named *Novus* was attacked by Sheridan in terms quite as unchivalrous and nonsensical as those which unscrupulous politicians employ now.

At the outset he made several mistakes; but it may be said of him in the pointed phrase of a clever American that "he who never makes mistakes, never makes anything." Even after marriage and when his necessities rendered failure the more serious, he wasted many precious hours in unproductive labour. He was more ingenious and daring in his schemes than rational and successful. The fragment of a long and elaborate essay by him has been saved from the oblivion which it deserved, and, moreover, it has been incorrectly printed. It is an appeal to Queen Charlotte to walk in the steps of Madame de Maintenon, who

differed in every particular from the uncomely, commonplace and prolific spouse of George the Third. Yet Sheridan strangely fancied that he might succeed in persuading Her penurious Majesty to give aid and patronage to "The Royal Sanctuary" which was to afford an asylum and training school for the daughters of impoverished noblemen, and was to be a copy of that of St. Cyr which Madame de Maintenon had founded. Queen Charlotte was to be its Chancellor; some of the first ladies in the land were to serve as sub-chancellors, and they were to nominate mistresses to teach feminine accomplishments and masters to teach modern languages.

Many passages reveal Sheridan's personal sentiments at a time when he was madly in love, and regarded women as the representatives on earth of the angels in Heaven. His manuscript resembles an Assyrian inscription too closely for the comfort of a reader; besides, his enthusiasm betrayed him into writing ungrammatically as well as illegibly. Though his meaning is often obscure, it can generally be divined. He begins by inquiring, "Why should the improvement of the genius and the understanding alone employ the part of Genius? It is better to make one man happy than a hundred wise. It is better to make one man virtuous than a million happy. Were I ever so capable, I could not employ myself in the latter while I thought I could be of use in the former." He goes on to express the opinion that it is the duty of Her Majesty the Queen, the first personage in the land, to grant him a hearing, his excuse for this demand being that his intention

is "to promote the well-being of her [Majesty's] sex and children."

He thinks that Queen Charlotte will not object to read a panegyric upon her sex, and he says:—"Before I plead the grievances of the best and most amiable part of the Creation, before I show them in the humiliating light to which our folly and brutality have suffered part of them to decline, I may surely be excused if I premise a word or two on their importance. The dispute about the proper sphere of woman is idle, that man should have attempted to draw a line for their orbit, shows that God meant them for comets and above our jurisdiction. With them the enthusiasm of poetry, the idolatry of love is the simple voice of Nature. They were meant to polish our nature, we should be brutes without them. They are our angels, our mistresses, our souls. And he who feels not a reverence for beauty has a vicious soul."

Again:—"In a state of Nature, say philosophers, women are treated like slaves, theirs are the employments of labour, the drudgery, the love. It is true and therein let them glory. . . . When man is scarce better than a brute, he shows his degeneracy by his treatment of women. But I will advance that, with every ray of reason that breaks in upon his mind, his respect for women increases. It is a plant that thrives in the sun of knowledge, and in proportion as we cheer its beams, it flourishes and repays us with its fruits. O shame to need the proof! I will suppose that for the reproof of these wits, their observations were just, and that they knew geography. In Java and Japan the women

are, absolute slaves and as it seems a part of our immutable constitution, I would venture to pronounce that their knowledge, virtue and politeness is at its Zenith. The influence that women have over us is as the medium through which the finer arts act upon us. The incense of our love and respect for them creates the atmosphere of our souls, which corrects and meliorates the beams of knowledge. . . .

“How can we be better employed than in perfecting that which governs us? The brighter they are, the more we shall be illumined. Were the minds of all women cultivated by inspiration, men would become wise of course. They are a sort of pentagraphs with which nature writes on the heart of man ; what she delineates on the original map will appear on the copy.”

The foregoing remarks are introductory to the exposition of a scheme to the effect that an institution resembling that at St. Cyr should be founded at Hampton Court, that it should be styled The Royal Sanctuary, and that the Queen should preside over it. He adds :—“Let the constitution of it be as of an university ; your Majesty, Chancellor ; some of the first ladies in the kingdom, sub-Chancellors ; whose care it will be to provide instructors of real merit. The classes are to be distinguished only by age,—none of degree. For, as their qualification should be gentility they are all on a level. The instructors should be women ; excepting for the languages. Latin and Greek should not be learned. The frown of pedantry destroys the blush of sensibility. The practical part of science, as of astronomy, etc., should be [taught]. In history they would find

there are other passions in man than love. As for novels there are some I would strongly recommend. But romances infinitely more. The one is a representation of the effects of the passions as they should be, the other as they are. The latter is falsely called nature ; it is a figure of depraved or corrupt society. The other is the glow of nature. Therefore I would exclude the novels that show human nature depraved. However well executed, the design will disgust.

“The next thing to be attended to is their *accomplishments*. They should early be instructed well in dancing and working embroidery, etc. Those whose genius should lead to it, in music and poetry and drawing. . . .

“A well-directed imagination more than an improved understanding, or honest disposition, promotes the welfare of individuals. They should ride and walk ; the younger part be invited to exercise by the little pastimes. Dancing and concerts ; always a spirit of emulation kept up by prizes. In the winter the French *petits jeux* at once entertains and quickens the genius. As to the moral duties and tone of the heart, that ever must depend on the people that conduct it. There should be a clergyman of an uncommon character for their curate. . . . They should be taken into life by degrees. Above all a knowledge of economy, and the management of a house should be inculcated as at the Nuns in France. They should in turn regard the different offices. The want of this has hurt matrimony more than can be expressed. But let them have modesty. I hate women link-boy like.”

This curious production may have been designed to appear as a pamphlet. It could scarcely have formed the book which, as Sheridan told his father-in-law on the 17th of November, 1774, "I am just now sending to the Press, and which I think will do me some credit, if it leads to nothing else."

The book referred to was probably a commentary on Lord Chesterfield's *Letters*, which had attracted public attention when published in 1774.¹ Some of the remarks are very shrewd, and they give evidence of the wide range of thought over which his mind had wandered when he indulged in his favourite practise of lingering, "in the shadowy thoroughfares of thought": "The giving way to people's vanity and

¹ Dr. Johnson's condemnation of these *Letters* is well known. The opinion of Mrs. Delany represents that of one who had no personal grievance against Chesterfield. She says in a letter to Bernard Granville on 4th of September, 1774: "I am not at all surprised you should be entertained with Lord Chesterfield's *Letters*, and approve of *many* of them; as a politician and what is called a man of the world, I suppose they are faultless, and his polishing precepts are useful and excellent, but I am afraid as you go on his *duplicity* and *immorality* will give you as much offence as his indiscriminate accusation does the ladies. Those who do not deserve his lash despise it, and conclude he kept very bad company. Those who are conscious they deserve his censure will be piqued but silent. The general opinion of these *Letters* among the better sort of men is, that they are ingenious, useful as to polish of manners, but *very hurtful* in a *moral sense*. He mentions a decent regard to religion, at the same time recommends falsehood even to your most intimate acquaintance—and adultery as an accomplishment. *Les Graces* are the sum total of his religion. The conclusion of his life showed how inferior his heart was to his head; unkind and ungrateful to an *excellent wife* who had laid *great obligations on him*, and the same to all his dependants."—"Correspondence of Mrs. Delany," vol. v., pp. 27, 28.

the flattering their weaknesses is a species of deceit which it is highly dangerous to give in to. The line of truth cannot while this is indulged in be drawn. . . .

“An attention to take advantage of the weaknesses of others can never be the characteristic of a great man, nor is the reserve he recommends consistent with a noble mind.

“Lord C.’s whole system is in no one article calculated to make a great man. A noble youth should be ignorant of the things he wishes him to know ; such a one would be too soon a man, ever to be a great man. The assurance he recommends is infallibly to be acquired. Let us ask what is vanity ? Is it simply the actual belief that we possess an excellence of two kinds ? If an ingenuous youth were asked what he would wish, his brother or himself to be wiser ?

“Emulation is a dangerous passion to encourage, in some points, in young men : it is so linked with envy. If you breed your son with reproach for not surpassing his schoolfellows, he will hate those who are before him. If he surpass them his vanity will not even admit of a comparison. Emulation to be encouraged not even in virtue. True virtue will, like the Athenian, rejoice in being surpassed. A friendly emulation cannot exist in two minds ; one must hate the perfections which eclipse him. Love cannot call it perfect virtue which thrives in another’s loss. Thus, from hating the quality in his competitor, he loses the respect for it in himself. ’Tis an animal Passion. Improve my son to be praised without comparison, to give your father Pleasure. A young man

by himself better educated than two. If emulation were good in one Point it would in all ; in dress of women. A Roman's emulation was not to excel his countrymen but to make his country excel. . . .

"A father's partial regard for his Son, or hope of a selfish gratification appears in all his letters. His sending a copy of the letter for his sister ; his object was the praise of his mode of education. How much more noble the affection of *Morni* in Ossian, 'O, that the name of Morni, etc.'¹

"The style no more studied than his conversation which all appeared as intended for the Press. The light and familiar writings of a Man of Lord Chesterfield's weight likely to work hurt to young men, who, dazzled by his repute, would gladly form themselves on his model and experience.

"His frequent directions for constant employment entirely ill-founded. A wise Man is formed more by the action of his own Thought than by continually feeding it. Hurry, he says, from Play to study and never be doing nothing. I say, frequently be unemployed ; sit and Think. . . .

"There are on every subject but a few leading and fixed ideas. Their tracks may be traced by your own genius, as well as read. A man of deep thought who shall have accustomed himself to

¹ "I have a son, O Fingal ! His soul has delighted in Morni's deeds ; but his sword has not been lifted against a foe, neither has his fame begun. I come with him to war ; to direct his arm in fight. His renown will be a delight to my soul, in the dark hour of my departure. O that the name of Morni were forgot among the people ! that the heroes would only say, 'Behold the father of Gaul !' "—"The Poems of Ossian," vol. ii., p. 147.

support or attack all he has read, will soon find nothing new. The mind like the body must not be wearied with exercise in thought, or, like Plants, too much watered. . . .

“The Letters should be read by none but one who had understanding enough to distinguish, and those would not read them. To a young mind the bad would be as seducing as the good.”

Sheridan's diligence in producing manuscript did not benefit him as a householder, which he had become in the spring of 1774 in Orchard Street, Portman Square. The winter had been spent by his wife and himself in the house of Stephen Storace, a composer of note in his day. His father-in-law furnished the house in Orchard Street. Sheridan, who was on affectionate terms with Mr. Linley when his own father declined to meet him and refused to recognize his wife as a daughter-in-law, thus wrote to Mr. Linley on the 17th of November, 1774 :—

“If I were to attempt to make as many apologies as my long omission in writing to you requires, I should have no room for any other subject. One excuse only I shall bring forward, which is, that I have been exceedingly employed, and I believe very profitably. However, before I explain how, I must ease my mind on a subject that much more nearly concerns me than any point of business or profit. I must premise to you that Betsy is now very well, before I tell you abruptly that she has encountered another disappointment and consequent indisposition. . . .

“I have been very seriously at work on a book, which I am just now sending to the press, and which

I think will do me some credit, if it leads to nothing else. However, the profitable affair is of another nature. There will be a comedy of mine in rehearsal at Covent Garden within a few days. I did not set to work on it till within a few days of my setting out for Crome, so you may think I have not, for these last six weeks, been very idle. I have done it at Mr. Harris's [the manager's] own request; it is now complete in his hands, and preparing for the stage. He, and some of his friends also who have heard it, assure me in the most flattering terms that there is not a doubt of its success. It will be very well played, and Harris tells me that the least shilling I shall get (if it succeeds) will be six hundred pounds. I shall make no secret of it towards the time of representation, that it may not lose any support my friends can give it."

In this letter Sheridan also tells his father-in-law that he had been offered the post of manager of the oratorios by the King's orders. He adds that he "declined the matter very civilly and very peremptorily, and that he expected an offer of the post would be made to Mr. Linley." Sheridan well knew that the desire of the King was to secure the services of his wife at oratorios. George the Third, after hearing her sing, had been greatly smitten with her. Horace Walpole, writing to the Countess of Ossory on the 16th of March, 1773, records that, "the King admires Miss Linley, and ogles her as much as he dares to do in so holy a place as an Oratorio, and at so devout a service as Alexander's Feast."¹

¹ Horace Walpole's "Letters," vol. v., p. 451.

While agreeing with his wife in objecting to her appearing in public,¹ she readily sang with his cordial approval to gratify their common friends and acquaintances. His conversational talents and her musical powers were attractions which helped to fill their house in Orchard Street with good company. Their presence was greatly desired where music was highly valued. At Mr. Coote's house, which was one of them, Sir Joshua Reynolds made their acquaintance and soon after he became their warm friend. When painting Mrs. Sheridan as St. Cecilia, he depicted Mr. Coote's two little daughters as her attendant angels. Here, too, Georgina, Duchess of Devonshire, first met Sheridan and his wife. Though charmed with their society, she hesitated about inviting them to Devonshire House; but her scruples were soon dissipated; and then she was as pleased to number them among her friends as they were to make her acquaintance, while Sheridan

¹ Moore gives a letter from Sheridan to his father-in-law, written at East Burnham on the 12th of May, 1773, in which he refuses to recognize any claim for his wife's services based on arrangements made before her marriage. The letter leaves it doubtful whether she went to sing at Oxford during the festivities when Lord North was installed as Chancellor of the University. It is certain that she did sing in the oratorio styled *The Prodigal Son*. Moore himself had been made acquainted with the facts, for he wrote at Bowood in his *Diary* on the 6th January, 1823, two years before the publication of his "Memoirs" of Sheridan: "Jekyll said that Mrs. Sheridan had sung once after her marriage, at the installation of Lord North at Oxford; and as there were degrees then conferred *honoris causâ*, Lord North said to Sheridan that he ought to have one *uxoris causâ*."

eventually became one of her most intimate, most trusted, and most serviceable advisers.¹

I have arrived at the critical stage in Sheridan's career. Till now he had been persevering in writing, but all that flowed from his pen had proved ineffectual for profit or fame. Pen, ink and paper are necessary for an author to give abiding form to his thoughts, but the experience which is equally requisite must be laboriously acquired. The mechanical means are to him what a rod, a line and artificial flies are to an angler, who, however, may undergo many disappointments before landing his first trout. He has to learn the knack of dropping a fly deftly on the stream where the fish are feeding, while keeping himself well out of sight. The very stream has its secrets, which are not revealed to the first-comer; the pools which are most promising in appearance being barren, whereas others may swarm with fish. When the art of angling and the stream itself have no mysteries for the fisherman, a good day's sport may be counted on. He may be extraordinarily fortunate at the outset, handling his rod rightly, almost by intuition, and hitting on the best spots by something resembling instinct but which, for lack

¹ Lady Cork informed Moore that the Duchess of Devonshire was anxious to have Mrs. Sheridan to sing at her house, but did not desire to have her husband whom she called "a player." "Reminded of this some time after by Lady Cork on her keeping a house two months unoccupied, which she had taken at great expense at Bath, and alleging for her reason that she and her party were detained from day to day at Chatsworth by the agreeableness of Sheridan's conversation."—Moore's *Diary*, vol. ii, p. 335.

of a better name, is styled good-luck. In like manner a beginner in writing may have the success of the veteran author and produce, as if by magic, what suits and serves the public taste.

The rule, however, is that which Taine¹ enunciated in his masterly discourse on being admitted to the French Academy in succession to Louis de Loménie. He then said that, when a young man's training is ended, he is told : " the world lies open before him, the truth being that he has to open it with his own hands and with an effort. It is a critical moment, as a life-long choice has to be made ; yet before he has tried a single one, how is he to select one course out of so many ? He generally trusts to chance and submits to an impulse. The vocation for which one has a bent is a sure guide ; but time is required to ascertain one's powers, and experiments have to be made before one can rightly direct one's course."²

Sheridan had now discovered his vocation. He earnestly laboured to bring to light the precious ore of which his mind contained a rich vein. The promise made by him to his father-in-law on the 17th of November, 1774, was fulfilled on the 17th of January, 1775, when the comedy of *The Rivals* was represented at Covent Garden Theatre. His anticipation,

¹ I cannot write the name of one with whose friendship I was honoured for upwards of a quarter of a century, without adding that the literature of France experienced as serious a loss by his death, when he was not an old man, as that of Great Britain did by the untimely death of Macaulay.

² *Derniers Essais de Critique et d'Histoire*, par H. A. Taine, p. 146.

in the same letter, that there was "not a doubt of its success," proved, however, to be premature. The comedy was not received with absolute disapproval, neither was it welcomed with the enthusiasm which sometimes ensures long life to a play, the public judgment being that, while it ought to have been better, it might have been worse.

The sanguine author did not lose heart. On the contrary, he profited by the experience which he had gained, subjecting the piece to a thorough revision and insisting upon the part of Sir Lucius O'Trigger being adequately filled. When performed again, its reception was as cordial as he could desire, and he reached at a bound the rank and fame of an original and a successful playwright.

He wrote of himself and his piece with modesty and candour in the preface to the printed version, frankly attributing many shortcomings to his youth and unacquaintance with the stage. He was careful to note, moreover, that he was not conversant with plays in general, either by reading or at the theatre, adding, "Yet I own that, in one respect, I did not regret my ignorance; for as my first wish in attempting a play was to avoid every appearance of plagiarism, I thought I should stand a better chance of effecting this from being in a walk that I had not frequented, and where, consequently, the progress of invention was less likely to be interrupted by starts of recollection: for on subjects on which the mind has been much informed, invention is slow of asserting itself. Faded ideas float in the fancy like half forgotten dreams; and the imagination in its fullest enjoy-

ments becomes suspicious of its offspring, and doubts whether it has created or adopted."

The critics of the printed version were less eulogistic than the audience who saw the comedy on the stage. One of its many merits is to have been specially suited for representation. Such a play often gives greater pleasure when seen than when read; indeed, plays like those of Byron, which he said were not composed "with the most remote view of the stage," deserve to be classed with Bishop Burnet's speech which he printed because it was not intended to be spoken. In view of the favour he had won from the theatre-going public, Sheridan could read with equanimity the disparaging comments of his literary censors. The *Gentlemen's Magazine*, which was then an authority on theatrical topics, pronounced the following judgment:—"The dialogue of the comedy is, in general, natural and pleasing; as to the plot, though we have often heard of younger brothers, and fortune-hunters assuming fictitious titles and estates, as credentials to rich heiresses, it seems very unlikely that real rank and fortune should be deemed an objection, and therefore disclaimed, as in the piece before us. Here the marvellous and romantic seem to lose sight of the natural and probable; as they also do in Lydia Languish's indifference to the man of her choice as soon as she discovers his real character, and that there are no impediments to their union."¹

While the comedy of *The Rivals* was applauded and the talk of the Town, Sir Joshua Reynolds was

¹ The *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. xlv., p. 122.

finishing Mrs. Sheridan's portrait as St. Cecilia. He produced few other masterpieces. When he painted "The Nativity," Mrs. Sheridan sat for the Virgin; but this work, which was numbered among his greatest, has unfortunately been destroyed. Neither Gainsborough nor he ever fixed upon canvas a more angelic face or a finer figure than that of the sweet singer, the loving mother and the doting wife.

The Rivals had the extraordinary triumph, as it was then considered, of holding the stage during sixteen nights. Soon after the comedy had been withdrawn for the season, Sir Joshua's painting of St. Cecilia was exhibited, and the public that had been impressed and delighted by Sheridan's dramatic talent, became enraptured with his wife's beauty.

Sheridan was the hero of the hour in the Linley family. He had the gratification, which far exceeds that of the loudest applause from strangers, of delighting a domestic circle. Mary Linley, the sister of Mrs. Sheridan, kept her informed about the feeling at Bath before and after the performance of *The Rivals*. She said in her first letter:—"We are all in the greatest anxiety about Sheridan's play, —though I do not think there is the slightest doubt of its succeeding. I was told last night that it was his own story, and therefore called 'The Rivals'; but I do not give any credit to this intelligence. . . . I am told he will get at the least £700 for his play."

The next letter was sent after the second and brilliant performance of the Comedy. Mrs. Sheridan had a turn for versifying; hence the supposition,

which was unfounded, that the epilogue, which had highly pleased the playgoers, was from her pen. Her sister wrote :—" It is impossible to tell you what pleasure we felt at the receipt of Sheridan's last letter, which confirmed what we had seen in the newspapers of the success of his play. The knowing ones were very much disappointed, as they had so very bad an opinion of its success. After the first night we were all indeed very fearful that the audience would go very much prejudiced against it. But now, there can be no doubt of its success, as it has certainly got through more difficulties than any comedy which has not met its doom the first night. I know you have been very busy in writing for Sheridan, —I don't mean copying but composing ; —it's true, indeed ; you must not contradict me when I say you wrote the much admired epilogue of *The Rivals*. How I long to read it ! What makes it more certain is, that my father guessed it was yours the first time he saw it praised in the papers."

She wrote from Bath on the 18th of February, after reading the play and when she was looking forward to seeing it on the stage :—" What shall I say of *The Rivals* !—A compliment must naturally be expected ; but really it goes so far beyond anything I can say in its praise, that I am afraid my modesty must keep me silent. When you and I meet I shall be better able to explain myself, and tell you how much I am delighted with it. We expect to have it here very soon :—it is now in rehearsal. You pretty well know the merits of our

principal performers. I'll show you how it is cast. . . . There, Madam, do not you think we shall do your *Rivals* some justice? I'm convinced it won't be better done anywhere out of London."

Three weeks pass, and the sister in the country can tell the sister in town what had been the result of the performance of the comedy at Bath:—"March 9, 1775. You will know, by what you see inclosed in this frank, my reason for not answering your letter sooner was that I waited the success of Sheridan's play at Bath; for, let me tell you, I look upon our theatrical tribunal though not in quantity, in quality as good as yours, and I do not believe there was a critic in the whole city that was not there. But, in my life, I never saw anything go off with such uncommon applause. I must first of all inform you that there was a very full house; the play was performed inimitably well; nor did I hear, for the honour of our Bath actors, one single prompt the whole night; but I suppose the poor creatures never acted with such shouts of applause in their lives, so that they were incited by that to do their best. They lost many of Malaprop's good sayings by the applause; in short, I never saw or heard anything like it; before the actors spoke they began their clapping. There was a new scene of the North Parade, painted by Mr. Davis, and a most delightful one it is, I assure you. Everybody says, Bowers in particular, that yours in Town is not so good. Most of the dresses were entirely new, and very handsome. On the whole, I think Sheridan is vastly obliged to poor dear Keasberry for getting

it up so well. We only wanted a good Julia to have made it quite complete. You must know that it was entirely out of Mrs. Didier's style of playing ; but I never saw acting better than Keasberry's—so all the critics agreed."

While Mrs. Sheridan must have read the news from Bath with special pleasure, the following note from her sister conveying intelligence of her husband's fame rapidly spreading throughout the country cannot have failed to gladden and exhilarate her :—" Bath. 22. August. 1775.—Tell Sheridan his play has been acted at Southampton :—above a hundred people were turned away the first night. They say there never was anything so universally liked. They have very good success at Bristol, and have played *The Rivals* several times.—Miss Barsanti, Lydia, and Mrs. Canning, Julia."

Sheridan's first dramatic venture had given him a place in the ranks of fame ; it now rested with him to follow with diligence the line in which he excelled.¹ It was not till *The Rivals* had become popular that his purse was filled ; then he had more money at his command than his father in his most prosperous days. He found, as many others have done, that

¹ In after life, he is said to have thought meanly of the play which first made him famous. Lady Cork told Moore that "Sheridan always said *The Rivals* was one of the worst plays in the language and he would have given anything he had not written it." Moore makes a remark which I regretfully confirm :—"Strange ! that *The Rivals* should be the only one of his pieces of which there appears to be no trace in his papers." *Diary*, vol. ii., pp. 275 and 335. I have found, however, a fragment in Sheridan's handwriting of the prologue spoken on the

the power of turning money to the best account is more difficult to exercise than to acquire wealth. The sums which were rapidly obtained, he recklessly squandered. He was a spoilt child of fortune in early life and spoilt children are never wise.

While the extraordinary success of this comedy was both gratifying and profitable to him, it was also most creditable to the taste of playgoers. The piece itself is noteworthy in the development of the English drama. It was among the first fruits of what would be termed, in contemporary newspaper slang, "a new departure." Plays in which the personages were sentimental and often lachrymose, had succeeded those in which the personages devoted themselves, with a diligence and determination which were misdirected, to wanton indulgence in unhallowed love. A slight concession was made in *The Rivals* to the liking of impressionable audiences for the sentimental view of human nature. The

tenth night by Mrs. Bulkley. I shall quote the version which is known and as much of the new one as can be determined :

Old.

"Granted our cause, our suit and trial
o'er,
The worthy serjeant need appear no
more :
In pleasing I a different client
choose,
He served the poet—I would serve
the Muse.
Like him I'll try to merit your
applause,
A female counsel in a female's
cause.
Look on this form," &c. &c.

New.

"Our cause suc
Our worthy serjeant need appear no
more :
In pleading I a different client
choose,
He helped the poet—I would serve
the Muse.
Like him, I'll try to merit your
applause,
A *female* counsel in a female's
cause.
Look on this face," &c. &c.

loves and woes of Falkland and Julia, which now excite a yawn or a smile, were then more thoroughly admired and relished by many playgoers than the broad farce of Bob Acres, the boisterous mirth of Sir Anthony Absolute and the subtle flashes of wit in the sayings of Captain Absolute and Sir Lucius O'Trigger. The distinguishing merit of this Comedy, and its difference from others which were popular, consisted in its abounding humour being wholly unalloyed with grossness.

Before *The Rivals* was enrolled among the classics of our stage, the sparkling comedies of Congreve were frequently represented; but their popularity was waning when Sheridan's began to rise. Frances Burney bears witness to this, by making the heroine of *Evelina* go to Drury Lane Theatre and write as follows to the Rev. Mr. Villars: "The play was *Love for Love* [by Congreve]; and though it is fraught with wit and entertainment I hope I shall never see it represented again; for it is so extremely indelicate—to use the softest word I can—that Miss Mirvan and I were perpetually out of countenance, and could neither make any observation ourselves nor venture to listen to those of others."

The still coarser plays of Wycherley and Vanbrugh could not then be represented till after having been carefully expurgated, and then they became as lifeless as their authors.

Six years before the appearance of *The Rivals* at Covent Garden Theatre, the most delicate and delightful writer of the century had shown, on the same stage, that his ability to produce a comedy was

equal to his marvellous skill as a poet, an essayist and a novelist. Goldsmith's *Good-natured Man* was a picture of real life and a most amusing and instructive production, a play which gave pleasure without the presence and aid of hysterical women or shameless rakes. The humour of *She Stoops to Conquer*, though broader, was equally wholesome. Between the time of Goldsmith ceasing to write and of Sheridan beginning his dramatic career, the pens of Murphy and Cumberland, of Foote and many others were busied upon tragedies, comedies and farces, none of which possessed the perennial interest that elevates the hit of the season to the rank of a classic.

In those days, most of the men and women who were burning to achieve popularity and independence wrote for the stage. At present, they supply ephemeral novels to circulating libraries, filling their pockets with the money which they cannot be blamed for coveting, and the minds of their readers with lewd and loathsome ideas which are both nauseous and deplorable. Audacity in pulling down moral fences, and scorning moral conduct, was cynically displayed during the dramatic orgy which disgraced England after the gloomy reign of the saints had been followed by the wild and wicked reign of the harlots. The baneful influence of the playwrights of the Restoration still affected the English stage when Sheridan was young. Contemporary dramatists were feebler than their predecessors without being impotent for evil. They reluctantly acknowledged him as their superior from the outset. He taught them a wholesome lesson. Indeed, his appearance

in the theatrical world was as startling, serviceable, and triumphant as that of the Black Knight who, in the tournament grandly depicted in *Ivanhoe*, entered the lists unheralded, unhorsed every competitor and carried off the prize.

The critic who should have been called upon in 1775 to prophesy concerning the author of *The Rivals*, would have shown himself as great a wizard as he who foretold Lochiel's fate, if he had affirmed that Sheridan's first comedy would still be a favourite with the public when the Nineteenth Century was nearing its close. Such critic's considerate friends might have thought that excessive enthusiasm had turned his head. Sheridan would perhaps have listened to the prophecy with mingled indifference and scepticism. He would cheerfully have bartered future fame for the immediate return of his father's love. Nothing is more pathetic in his career than his longing to be restored to his father's favour and forgiven the offence of marrying Miss Linley, at the time when he was the hero of the hour and envied by less fortunate contemporaries. His father and his sisters joined the multitude that flocked to see *The Rivals*. Sheridan gazed upon them from a distance with an aching heart. After returning home, he shed tears at the thought of the estrangement for which his father was responsible, and told his sympathetic wife that it grieved him "to think that there sat his father and his sisters before him, and yet that he alone was not permitted to go near them or speak to them."

VIII.

ON THE FLOOD-TIDE OF FORTUNE.

THE unsatisfactory acting of Mr. Lee as Sir Lucius O'Trigger had contributed to put the success of *The Rivals* in jeopardy. Mr. Clinch made the same part one of the most popular in the play, and Sheridan was not unmindful of his obligation to the performer who had rendered him an inestimable service. This actor's benefit for the year 1775 took place on the 2nd of May, the occasion being made memorable by the representation of a farce styled *St. Patrick's Day*, which Sheridan wrote for him. Produced to serve a purpose, which it did admirably, this farce exemplified the author's versatility and readiness; but it cannot be classed among the pieces into which he put his whole heart and which do him infinite credit.

The dialogue is sparkling and far superior to the plot, which is devoid of ingenuity and startling incident. Mr. Credulous, a Justice of the Peace, has a daughter Lauretta, with whom Lieutenant O'Connor, in charge of a recruiting party, is in love. Dr. Rosy, the village medical man, is on the side of the Lieutenant, while Mr. Credulous and his wife are resolved that the lovers shall not marry. After

a game of cross-purposes, which is not very cleverly planned or played, Mr. Credulous consents to his daughter Lauretta being united to the man whom he detests.

Any skilled playwright of the day could have written a farce like this, with the exception of several passages which, if I may be permitted to coin a word, are *Sheridanese*. The originality of Sheridan consists in his having had a style wholly his own from the outset, a style which it was easier to criticize than to copy. The opening passages of this farce differ from any which had appeared from the pen of a contemporary. These are :—

“1ST SOLDIER. I say you are wrong ; we should all speak together, each for himself, and all at once, that we may be heard the better.

“2ND SOLDIER. Right, Jack ; we’ll argue in platoons.

“3RD SOLDIER. Ay, ay, let him have our grievances in a volley.”

Again, when these private soldiers complain to Lieutenant O’Connor about the conduct of the inn-keepers, he asks :—

“Pray, which of the houses use you ill ?

“1ST SOLDIER. There’s the Red Lion ain’t half the civility of the Old Red Lion.

“2ND SOLDIER. There’s the White Horse, if he wasn’t case-hardened, ought to be ashamed to show his face.

“O’CONNOR. Very well ; the Horse and the Lion shall answer for it at the Quarter Sessions.

“TROUNCE. The Two Magpies are civil enough, but the Angel uses us like devils, and the Rising Sun refuses us light to go to bed by.

“O’CONNOR. Then, upon my word, I’ll have the Rising Sun put down, and the Angel shall give security for his good behaviour.”

One of Sheridan's marked peculiarities was to be most careful in making his personages use the technical language of their calling. This is praiseworthy—unless carried to extremes, when it becomes unpleasing. For instance, Lieutenant O'Connor, when describing London ladies, and Dr. Rosy when depicting his deceased wife, talk rather too artificially or professionally. O'Connor having said that Lauretta's great charm lay in her simplicity and naturalness, Dr. Rosy remarks :—

"You are for beauty as nature made her, hey! No artificial graces, no cosmetic varnish.

"O'CONNOR. Upon my word, Doctor, you are right; the London ladies are always too handsome for me; then they are so defended, such a circumvallation of hoop, with a breastwork of whalebone that would turn a pistol-bullet, much less Cupid's arrows,—then turret on turret on top, with stores of concealed weapons, under pretence of black pins,—and above all a standard of feathers that would do honour to a Knight of the Bath. Upon my conscience, I could as soon embrace an Amazon, armed at all points.

"DR. ROSY. Right, right, my Alexander! my taste to a tittle.

"O'CONNOR. Then, Doctor, though I admire modesty in women, I like to see their faces. I am for the changeable rose; but with one of these quality Amazons, if their midnight dissipations had left them blood enough to raise a blush, they have not room enough in their cheeks to show it. To be sure, bashfulness is a very pretty thing; but in my mind, there is nothing on earth so impudent as an everlasting blush.

"DR. ROSY. My taste, my taste! Well, Lauretta is none of these. Ah! I never see her but she puts me in mind of my poor dear wife. Oh poor Dolly! I never shall see her like again: such an arm for a bandage—veins that seemed to invite the lancet. Then her skin, smooth and white as a gallipot; her mouth as round and not larger than the mouth of a penny phial; her lips, conserve of roses; and then her teeth—none of your sturdy

fixtures—ache as they would, it was but a small pull, and out they came. I believe I have drawn half a score of her poor dear pearls—(*weeps*). But what avails her beauty? Death has no consideration—one must die as well as another. Fair and ugly, crooked or straight, rich or poor—flesh is grass—flowers fade."

When Dr. Rosy is alone and moralizing about the situation of his friend O'Connor, he adheres to his professional speech even in monologue; he talks "shop" out of season:—

"Well, I think my friend is now in a fair way of succeeding. Ah! I warrant he is full of hope and fear, doubt and anxiety; truly he has the fever of love strong upon him: faint, peevish, languishing all day, with burning, restless nights. Ah! just my case when I pined for my poor dear Dolly! when she used to have her daily colics, and her dear little doctor be sent for. Then would I interpret the language of her pulse—declare my own sufferings in my receipt for her—send her a pearl necklace in a pill-box, or a cordial draught with an acrostic on the label."

There are, however, many passages which, as I have said, do credit to Sheridan's sparkling pen. The following one is as humorous as that in which Sir Lucius O'Trigger tells Acres, "I'm told there's very snug lying in the Abbey." Mr. Credulous thinks he is dying; his wife urges him to make his will and bequeath all his property to her; he says "I don't like death," and her reply is, "A moment and it is all over;" thereupon he exclaims, "Ay, but it leaves a numbness behind that lasts a plaguy long time."

This account of *St. Patrick's Day*, while sufficing to exhibit its character, dispenses me from further reference to the piece when I shall deal with those dramatic works of Sheridan which are treasured on account of their incomparable merits.

On the 17th of March, 1775, a boy was born to him of whom, as the years passed by, he became deservedly proud and publicly proclaimed, when the boy had reached manhood, that he should esteem it a high honour to be hailed as the father of Tom Sheridan. At Sheridan's death, this boy was the only surviving child of his marriage with Miss Linley, and Tom died at the age of forty-two, having given evidence of talents which were worthy of both his parents. He left behind him three sons and three daughters. His daughters were numbered among the loveliest women of their time, while their intellectual gifts were as remarkable as their exquisite features. They are now known by the names of the Duchess of Somerset, the Honourable Caroline Norton and Lady Dufferin.

On the 17th of January, 1775, Sheridan's first comedy was played at Covent Garden; on the 2nd of May, his first farce and, on the 21st of November in the same year, his comic opera, *The Duenna*, delighted the frequenters of that theatre. These pieces must have been written rapidly; no rough drafts of them having been preserved to show how the author had planned the plots or elaborated the most effective passages. It is probable that they appeared in their first and unpremeditated form, yet they were finished in every detail. Sheridan brought a full as well as a fresh mind to his work. The opportunity had alone been lacking for revealing his dramatic treasures to the world.

Sheridan's father-in-law and brother-in-law contributed to render *The Duenna* the most successful

work of the kind since Gay had surprised and delighted the public with *The Beggar's Opera*. A letter from Sheridan to Mr. Linley, dated October, 1775, contains the story of their labours:—"We received your songs to-day with which we are exceedingly pleased. I shall profit by your proposed alterations; but I'd have you to know that we are much too chaste in London to admit such strains as your Bath spring inspires. We dare not propose a peep beyond the ankle on any account; for the critics in the pit at a new play are much greater prudes than the ladies in the boxes. Betsy [Mrs. Sheridan] intended to have troubled you with some music for correction and I with some stanzas, but an interview with Harris [the Manager of Covent Garden Theatre] to-day has put me from the thoughts of it, and bent me upon a much more important petition. You may easily suppose it is nothing else than what I said I would not ask in my last. But, in short, unless you can give us three days in Town, I fear our Opera will stand a chance to be ruined.

"Harris is extravagantly sanguine of its success as to plot and dialogue, which is to be rehearsed next Wednesday at the theatre. They will exert themselves to the utmost in the scenery, etc., but I never saw anyone so disconcerted as he was at the idea of there being no one to put them in the right way as to music. They have no one there whom he has any opinion of—as to Fisher (one of the Managers) he don't choose he should meddle with it. He entreated me in the most pressing

terms to write instantly to you, and wanted, if he thought it would be any weight, to write himself. Is it possible to contrive this? Couldn't you have [your son] Tom to superintend the concert for a few days? If you can manage it, you will really do me the greatest service in the world. As to the state of the music, I want but three more airs, but there are some glees and quintets in the last act, that will be inevitably ruined, if we have no one to set the performers at least in the right way. Harris has set his heart so much on my succeeding in this application, that he still flatters himself he may have a rehearsal of the music in Orchard Street, to-morrow se'nnight.

"Every hour's delay is a material injury both to the opera and the theatre, so that if you can come and relieve us of this perplexity, the return of the post must only forerun your arrival; or (what will make us much happier) might it not bring *you*? I shall say nothing at present about the lady 'with the soft look and manner,' because I am full of more than hopes of seeing you. For the same reason I shall delay to speak about G[arrick]; only this much I will say, that I am more than ever positive I could make good my part of the matter; but that I still remain an infidel as to G[arrick]'s retiring or parting with his share, though I confess he seems to come closer to the point in naming his price. Your ever sincere and affectionate R. B. Sheridan." On a blank part of the paper are the following lines:—"Dearest father, I shall have no spirits or hopes of the opera, unless we see you. Eliza Ann Sheridan."

Mr. Linley promised to visit London, but at a

later day than his son-in-law desired. Another appeal was made to him. The following passages in it exhibit the care which Sheridan, who had nearly as little ear for music as Charles James Fox, bestowed upon that part of *The Duenna* to which an audience would give the greatest attention and with which, if well executed, those who liked music would be the best pleased :—" My intention was to have closed the first act with a song, but I find it is not thought so well. Hence I trust you with one of the inclosed papers ; and, at the same time, you must excuse my impertinence in adding an idea of the cast I would wish the music to have ; as I think I have heard you say you never heard Leoni [who took the part of Don Carlos], and I cannot briefly explain to you the character and situation of the persons on the stage with him.

"The first (a dialogue between Quick and Mrs. Mattocks) I would wish to be a pert, sprightly air ; for, though some of the words mayn't seem suited to it, I should mention that they are neither of them in earnest in what they say. Leoni takes it up seriously, and I want him to show himself advantageously in the six lines, beginning ' Gentle Maid.'¹

"I should tell you that he sings nothing well but in a plaintive or pastoral style ; and his voice is such as appears to me always to be hurt with much

¹ " Gentle maid, ah ! why suspect me ?
Let me serve thee, then reject me.
Canst thou trust, and I deceive thee ?
Art thou sad and shall I grieve thee ?
Gentle maid, ah ! why suspect me ?
Let me serve thee, then reject me."

accompaniment. I have observed, too, that he never gets so much applause as when he makes a cadence. Therefore my idea is, that he should make a flourish at 'Shall I grieve thee?' and return to 'Gentle Maid,' and so sing that part of the tune again. After that, the two last lines, sung by the three, with the persons only varied, may get them off with as much spirit as possible. The second act ends with a *slow* glee,¹ [trio?] therefore I think the two last lines in question had better be brisk, especially as Quick and Mrs. Mattocks are concerned in it.

"The other is a song of Wilson's in the third act. I have written it to your tune, which you put some words to, beginning, 'Prithee, prithee, pretty man!' I think it will do vastly well for the words: Don Jerome sings them when he is in particular spirits; therefore the tune is not too light, though it might seem so by the last stanza—but he does not mean to be grave there, and I like particularly the returning to 'O the Days when I was young.'²

¹ (*Trio*.) "Soft pity never leaves the gentle breast
Where love has been received a welcome guest;
As wandering saints poor huts have sacred made,
He hallows every heart he once has swayed,
And, when his presence we no longer share,
Still leaves compassion as a relic there."

² "Oh! the days when I was young, When I laughed in fortune's spite; Talked of love the whole day long, And with nectar crowned the night.	Then it was, old father Care, Little recked I of his frown; Half thy malice youth could bear, And the rest a bumper drown.
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"We have mislaid the notes, but Tom [Linley] remembers it. If you don't like it for words, will you give us one? But it must go back to 'O the days' and be *funny*. I have not done troubling you yet, but must wait till Monday."

Sheridan was as painstaking as he was ingenious in preparing a play for the stage. Most of his biographers have given currency to the false notion that he always put off his task to the last moment and then executed it in a perfunctory manner. The following extracts from another letter to Mr. Linley supply further evidence of the extreme care and the clear eye for effect with which *The Duenna* was composed:—" . . . I enclose the words I had made for 'Wind, gentle evergreen,' which will be sung, as a catch, by Mrs. Mattocks, Dubellamy and Leoni. I don't mind the words not fitting the notes as well as the original ones. 'How merrily we live,' and 'Let's drink and let's sing,'

"Truth, they say, lies in a well,	"True, at length my vigour's flown,
Why, I vow I ne'er could see;	I have years to bring de- cay;
Let the water-drinkers tell, There it always lay for me.	For the locks that now I own, And the few I have are grey.
But when sparkling wine went round,	Yet old Jerome, thou mayst boast,
Never saw I falsehood's mask;	While thy spirits do not tire,
But still honest truth I found In the bottom of each flask.	Still beneath thy age's frost Glows a spark of youthful fire."

are to be sung by a company of friars over their wine.¹

"The words will be parodied, and the chief effect I expect from them must arise from their being *known*; for the joke will be much less for these jolly fathers to sing anything new, than to give what the audience are used to annex the idea of jollity to. For the other things Betsy mentioned, I only wish to have them with such accompaniment as you would put to the *present* words, and I shall have got words to my liking for them by the time they reach me. . . .

"My father was astonishingly well received on Saturday night in Cato: I think it will not be many days before we are reconciled.²

"The enclosed are the words for 'Wind, gentle evergreen,' a passionate song for Mrs. Mattocks, and another for Miss Brown, which solicit to be clothed with melody by you and are all I want.³

"Mattocks' I could wish to be a broken, passionate affair, and the first two lines may be recitative,

1 "This bottle's the sun of our table,
His beams are rosy wine:
We, planets, that are not able
Without his help to shine.
Let mirth and glee abound!
You'll soon grow bright
With borrowed light,
And shine as he goes round."

² Sheridan's father forgave his son for having married Miss Linley when the erring and devoted son had the theatrical world at his feet and was able to appoint him stage manager of Drury Lane Theatre.

³ Moore points out that the words of this song, which were composed in accordance with Sheridan's suggestions, are omitted

or what you please, uncommon. Miss Brown sings here in a joyful mood : we want her to show in it as much execution as she is capable of, which is pretty well ; and, for variety, we want Mr. Simpson's hautboy to cut a figure, with replying passages, etc., in the way of Fisher's *M'ami* [*sic*] *il bel idol mio*, to abet which I have lugged in Echo who is always allowed to play her part. I have not a moment more. Yours ever sincerely."

The last letter which passed between Sheridan and Mr. Linley, before the production of *The Duenna*, is dated the 2nd of November, 1775, and the following passage accords with those already quoted concerning the author's attention to the details of his piece :—"Our music is now all finished and rehearsing, but we are greatly impatient to see *you*. We hold your coming to be *necessary* beyond conception. You say you are at our service after Tuesday next ; then I conjure you by that you do possess, in which I include all the powers that preside over harmony, to come next Thursday night (this day se'nnight) and we will fix a rehearsal for Friday morning. From what I see of their rehearsing at present, I am become still more anxious to see you.

"We have received all your songs, and are vastly pleased with them. You misunderstood me as to the hautboy song ; I had not the least intention to

in many editions of *The Duenna*. Not having found the manuscript, I quote from his version :—

"Sharp is the woe that wounds the jealous mind,
When treachery two fond hearts would rend ;
But oh ! how keener far the pang to find
That traitor in our bosom friend."

fix on *Bel idol mio*. However, I think it is particularly well adapted, and, I doubt not, will have a great effect."

The Duenna was performed at Covent Garden Theatre for the first time on the 21st of November, 1776.¹ No other English opera had been so well received and popular. Before 1776, *The Beggar's Opera* was unprecedented of its kind in the annals of the stage, and playgoers then said with as much respect as they would have discussed a miracle, that it had been represented sixty-three nights in succession. Seventy-five was the number of the performances of *The Duenna* during the first season. At the beginning of the year 1775, Sheridan was known to the readers of newspapers as a young man who had fought duels in romantic circumstances and as the husband of the loveliest woman and the sweetest singer of her day. Before the year closed he had no superior in the favour of playgoers.

The comments of Moore on *The Duenna* are better than anything else in his "Memoirs" of Sheridan. He could appreciate such a production. His admiration of it was untinctured with jealousy, and he wrote what was both true and forcible when he characterized *The Duenna* as "one of the very few operas in our language which combines the merits of legitimate comedy with the attractions of poetry and song."¹ He gives some of the suppressed passages,

¹ My friend, Mr. Sutherland Edwards, whose competence as a musical critic is indisputable and who possesses an unrivalled knowledge of operatic works, has been so kind as to write for my use the

which I shall quote, with the context, italicizing the additions. The first occurs in the opening scene when Lopez enters with a dark lantern :—

“ Past three o'clock !—So ! a notable hour for one of my regular disposition, to be strolling like a bravo through the streets of Seville ! *A plague on these haughty damsels, say I ! When they play their airs on their whining gallants, they ought to consider that we are the chief sufferers,—we have all their ill-humours at second-hand. Donna Louisa's cruelty to my master converts itself into blows by the time it gets to me : she can frown me black and blue at any time, and I shall carry the marks of the last box on the ear she gave me to my grave. Nay, if she smiles on any one else, I am the sufferer for it ; if she says a civil word to a rival, I am a rogue and a scoundrel ; and, if she sends him a letter, my back is sure to pay the postage.* Well, of all services, to serve a young lover is the hardest. Not that I am an enemy to love ; but my love and my master's differ strangely. Don Ferdinand is much too gallant to eat, drink or sleep :—now my love gives me an appetite ; then I am fond of dreaming of my mistress and I love dearly to toast her. This cannot be done without good sleep and good liquor :

following comments on *The Duenna* :—“ With the progress of musical composition, especially in connexion with the Drama, *The Duenna*, greatly admired as it was on its first production, passed out of fashion ; and in spite of the simplicity and charm of many of the melodies composed for the work by Linley, in spite, above all, of the ingenuity, wit and humour of the piece, it may be doubted whether Sheridan's *Duenna* will ever be played again in its original form. . . . A justly admired composer of our own time, Mr. J. L. Roedel, has set to music Sheridan's ancient opera-book with such lyrical additions as the taste and fashion of the day seemed to render necessary, but with no change whatever in the original dialogue, and *The Duenna* with music by Roedel will probably supersede *The Duenna* with music by Linley, just as the operatic version of Beaumarchais' *Barber of Seville* with music by Rossini has displaced the older operatic version of the same work with music by Paisiello.”

hence my partiality to a feather-bed and a bottle. What a pity, now, that I have not further time for reflections ; but my master expects thee, honest Lopez, to secure his retreat from Donna Clara's window, as I guess ! [Music without.] Hey, sure, I heard music ! So, so, who have we here ? Oh, Don Antonio, my master's friend, come from the masquerade, to serenade my young mistress, Donna Louisa, I suppose : so ! we shall have the old gentleman up presently. Lest he should miss his son, I had best lose no time in getting to my post."

At the beginning of the 3rd scene of the 2nd act there is a variation between the manuscript and the printed text. Don Ferdinand speaking to Don Jerome says of Don Antonio "But he has never sullied his honour, which, with his title, has outlived his means." Don Jerome answers : "Psha ! you talk like a blockhead ! nobility, without an estate, is as ridiculous as gold lace on a frieze coat." The manuscript version of Don Jerome's speech is more far-fetched and less pointed : "Have they ? More shame for them ! What business have honour or titles to survive when property is extinct ? Nobility is but as a helpmate to a good fortune, and, like a Japanese wife, should perish on the funeral pile of the estate !" A song which is not to be found in some editions of *The Duenna* deserves the praise which Moore lavished upon it :

(1)

"Ah ! cruel maid, how hast
thou changed
The temper of my mind !
My heart, by thee from love
estranged,
Becomes, like thee, unkind.

(2)

"By fortune favoured, clear in
fame,
I once ambitious was ;
And friends I had who fanned
the flame,
And gave my youth ap-
plause.

(3)

" But now my weakness all
accuse,
Yet vain their taunts on me ;
Friends, fortune, fame itself
I'd lose,
To gain one smile from
thee.

(5)

" But days, like this, with
doubting curst,
I will not long endure—
Am I disdained—I know the
worst,
And likewise know my cure.

(4)

" And only thou shouldst not
despise
My weakness or my woe ;
If I am mad in others' eyes,
'Tis thou hast made me so.

(6)

" If, false, her vows she dare
renounce
That instant ends my pain ;
For, oh ! the heart must break
at once,
That cannot hate again."

It is unpleasant to cancel what has cost much labour, and the author who does so judiciously displays both insight and courage. Sheridan added the following two stanzas to the song, beginning "Give Isaac the Nymph," which he suppressed before the piece was played. Those who read them will agree with Moore in holding that he acted rightly :—

" To one thus accomplished I durst speak my mind,
And flattery doubtless would soon make her kind ;
For the man who should praise her she needs must adore,
Who ne'er in her life received praises before.

" But the frowns of a beauty in hopes to remove,
Should I prate of her charms, and tell of my love ;
No thanks wait the praise which she knows to be true,
Nor smiles for the homage she takes as her due."

Writing for the theatre did not wholly engross Sheridan's thoughts or time ; he was deeply immersed in politics and greatly concerned about the contest which had begun between the Motherland

and her thirteen Colonies in America. Dr. Johnson's pamphlet, *Taxation no Tyranny*, appeared in the same year that Sheridan's earliest plays were put on the stage. He contemplated showing that Johnson's arguments were foolish vapouring in sonorous sentences. The notes he made for a pamphlet which, happily for his acquaintance with Johnson, was never finished, prove that political speculation was as natural to his mind as dramatic writing. They were the production of a statesman in embryo. A few sentences will exhibit their character.

"The man of letters is rarely drawn from obscurity by the inquisitive eye of a Sovereign : it is enough for Royalty to gild the laurelled brow, not explore the garret or the cellar. In this case, the return will be generally ungrateful. His patron is most possibly disgraced and in opposition—if he follows the dictates of gratitude, he must speak his language, but he may lose his Pension—but to be [a] standing supporter of the Ministry, is probably to take advantage of that competence against his benefactor. When it happens that there is great experience and political knowledge, this is more excusable ; but it is truly unfortunate when the fame of far different abilities adds weight to the attempts of rashness. . . .

"Men seldom think deeply on subjects on which they have no choice of opinion : they are fearful of encountering obstacles to their faith (as in religion), and so are content with the surface."

In fortunate ignorance of what Sheridan had meditated, Dr. Johnson proposed him, a year later, as a member of the Literary Club, on the ground

“that he who has written the two best comedies of the age [*The Rivals* and *The Duenna*] is surely a remarkable man.” His election was at once an honour and a privilege. Charles James Fox presided on the occasion. Among the other members present were Fordyce, Gibbon, Garrick, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Adam Smith and Edmund Burke.

Mrs. Carlyle, the clever and disillusionized wife of a clever and most imperfect husband, wrote a few words to Mr. Francis Espinasse which have a striking application to Sheridan at the time that *The Duenna* had increased his popularity: “I suppose no man of talent—real talent I mean, ever jumped into the right place for him, until after a great deal of trying and struggling, if even then.”¹

It might fairly have been conjectured that, after his theatrical triumphs, Sheridan would have resolved to consider writing for the stage as a vocation by which he might realize a large fortune and mount to a high seat in Fame’s temple. He was then twenty-four, possessing a good eye for scenic effect and being absolutely ignorant of business. His ambition, however, was to become the chief proprietor of Drury Lane Theatre and its manager. He wrote several letters to his father-in-law on the subject, in which his hopes, fears and projects are set forth. His own father had not only become reconciled to him, as I have already said, but he was ready to fill a subordinate office in the theatre. His father-in-law became a proprietor. He was assured,

¹ “Literary Recollections and Sketches,” by Francis Espinasse, p. 272.

moreover, that he would earn from the theatre a larger income than "he could make out of it."

Sheridan's letters on this subject do not merit reproduction, nor are the discussions, as to how he contrived to raise his proportion of the funds for buying Garrick's large share, worthy of the space they have filled and the attention which they have received. The important and extraordinary fact is that Garrick, who was an experienced man of the world and a shrewd judge of men, should have desired the young, inexperienced and unbusinesslike Sheridan to be his successor.

In October, 1775, Sheridan wrote to his father-in-law concerning Garrick's possible retirement. On the last day in that year, he informed Mr. Linley that the retirement was determined upon, that the theatre was valued at £70,000 of which £35,000 represented Garrick's share, and the annual interest was £3,500. He added :—"While this is *cleared*, the proprietors are *safe*, but I think it must be *infernal* management indeed that does not double it." In June, 1776, an agreement was signed according to which Garrick sold his share for £35,000, the buyers being Sheridan, Linley and Dr. Ford. The first and second took four shares amounting to £20,000, and the third took three amounting to £15,000. Two years later Lacy's share, bringing the total capital up to £70,000 was acquired by the partners. Where the money was obtained to effect this purchase has puzzled many of Sheridan's biographers. Mr. Brander Mathews was the first to supply an explanation which, like all complete

solutions of a mystery, appears to be as obvious as it is simple.¹ The truth is that Sheridan and his partners had not to find thousands in cash, out of their private means, when they stepped into the place of Garrick. A share in Drury Lane Theatre was a share in a monopoly; it was regarded as good a security as so much free-hold land, upon which a banker had no hesitation in advancing money. Sheridan had no hesitation in pledging the income of the theatre for the payment of annuities and, by this easy method of financing, the property was acquired. The partners were confident that the

¹ "Most writers on the subject have taken this note of Sheridan's [quoted by Moore and purporting that he paid Lacy upwards of £45,000] to mean that he paid at least £45,000 in cash, and they have exhausted their efforts in guessing where he got the money. But if we compare Moore's statement with Watkins's, we get nearer a solution of the difficulty. Watkins says that Lacy's share was already mortgaged for £31,500, and that Sheridan assumed this mortgage, and agreed further to pay in return for the equity of redemption, two annuities of £500 each. This double obligation, (the mortgage for £31,500 and the annuities) represents a price exceeding £45,000; but it did not call for the expenditure of a single penny in cash. On the contrary the purchase of Lacy's half of the theatre, actually put money into Sheridan's pocket, for he at once divided his original one-seventh between Linley and Dr. Ford, making each of their shares up to one-fourth; and even if they paid him no increase on the original price, he would have been enabled to pay off the £8,700 mortgages to Dr. Ford, and to Mr. Wallis, and to get back the £1,300 which he seems to have advanced himself. In fact, it appears that Sheridan invested only £1,300 in cash when he bought one-seventh of Drury Lane Theatre, in 1776, and that he received this back when he became possessed of one-half of Drury Lane Theatre, in 1778, then valued at £90,000."—*Sheridan's Comedies*, by Brander Mathews, pp. 30, 31.

returns under their management would exceed what they had been under that of Garrick ; they probably agreed in thinking that Sheridan would show how to double the profits which Garrick had made.¹ It is as common now, as it was then, for new managers of an old undertaking to base their calculations upon the fanciful ground that those whom they had succeeded did not thoroughly understand their business.

Sheridan was blessed with the boldness which frequently commands success and inspired with the ambition which disregards the limitations of commonplace prudence in the conduct of human affairs. He had risen rapidly to a giddy height. He owed every-

¹ Mr. Linley was quite as sanguine as any of the partners. A fulsome letter from him to Garrick exhibits how greatly he felt himself under an obligation, and it implies that his expectations of the result were very high :—"Bath, 29 January, 1776. My heart tells me I ought not to defer acknowledging, and thanking you most sincerely for the friendship you have shown to me and Sheridan, in permitting us to purchase a part of your share in the patent of Drury Lane Theatre.

"The loss to be sustained by the public, by your quitting the stage, will be truly felt, but cannot justly be described ; no person, I may boldly say, will ever appear after you, but with diminished lustre. You are a centre star of glory on this stage of the world ; and that you may long shine a light to us that walk in darkness, and then retire but to 'new trick your beams, and flame in the forehead of the morning sky' of the next, is the sincere wish and prayer of your ever obedient and most devoted humble servant, Thomas Linley.

"I shall be in Town in about ten days, and you may depend upon my punctuality in fulfilling my part of the engagement betwixt us."—"Private Correspondence of David Garrick," vol. ii., p. 131.

thing to himself and he may be pardoned for implicitly trusting in his own powers. His father had opposed him at every turn ; his father-in-law, though ready to help, could contribute but little assistance. The world smiled upon him when he had become indifferent to its frown. If he had been more plodding and less venturesome, he might have had a more peaceful existence. Nature and his early training had made of him a man upon whom warnings were wasted. He had the enthusiasm of a sanguine temperament combined with the recklessness which he had inherited and, while possessing in an exceptionally large measure the qualities which enable a man to heap up riches, he had a bias towards sumptuous living and lavish outlay which proved to be the ineradicable bane of his life.

IX.

MONARCH OF DRURY LANE

ON the 31st of December, 1775, Sheridan told Mr. Linley:—"I am finishing a two-act comedy for Covent Garden, which will be in rehearsal in a week." Nothing is known about this piece. It cannot have been ready for representation when, on the 21st of September, 1776, Drury Lane Theatre was opened under Sheridan's management. Playgoers then expected that a new comedy, from his pen, would be provided for their amusement. Though disappointed, they were yet prepared to bide their time. Kitty Clive, the popular actress who was Garrick's favourite and Horace Walpole's friend, wrote to Garrick during the negotiations which ended in his retirement from the stage and said:—"What a strange jumble of people they have put in the papers as to the purchasers of the patent! I have some opinion of Mr. Sheridan, as I hear everybody says he is very sensible; then he has a divine wife and I loved his mother dearly."¹

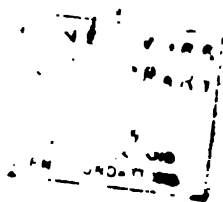
He began his career as Manager by reviving *The Rivals*, which originally appeared at Covent Garden Theatre. The *Old Bachelor* by Congreve was next

¹ "The Private Correspondence of Garrick," vol. i., pp. 128, 129.



PORTRAIT OF SHERIDAN, FROM A PENCIL SKETCH ASCRIBED TO
SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

Vol. i. To face p. 314.



performed, and it was succeeded by a new tragedy which may have been the legacy from Garrick about which Sheridan wrote to Mr. Linley:—"Touching the tragedies you mention, if you speak of them merely as certain tragedies that may be had, I should think it impossible we could find the least room, as you know Garrick saddles us with one which we must bring out. But, if you have any particular desire that any of them must be done, it is another affair, and I should be glad to see them. Otherwise, I would much rather you would save me the disagreeableness of giving my opinion to a fresh tragic bard, being already in disgrace with about nine of that irascible fraternity."

Captain G. E. Ayscough's adaptation of Voltaire's *Semiraminis* was the tragedy which Sheridan put on the stage under compulsion, and its fate accorded with his anticipation and its deserts. The exertions of the adapter and his friends, for whose aid he made a pathetic appeal in the prologue, served to avert for three nights the withdrawal of a piece which over-taxed the patience of the most good-natured playgoers.¹ Other vexations were experienced by Sheridan. His predecessor had Lacy for a partner,

¹ Sheridan wrote the epilogue which Mrs. Yates spoke, and his admirers, among whom Charles Butler was one, classed it among his best pieces. As it is not generally known, I shall reproduce it:—

"Dishevelled still like Asia's bleeding
Queen
Shall I with jests deride the tragic
scene?
No, beauteous mourners!—from
whose downcast eyes,
The Muse has drawn her noblest
sacrifice!

Whose gentle bosoms, pity's altars,
bear
The crystal incense of each falling
tear!
There lives the poet's praise! no
critic art
Can match the comment of a feeling
heart

and Lacy was another of Garrick's legacies. Before a month had elapsed, the partners under the new arrangement found it impossible to work in harmony with him, while he openly resented the exercise of their authority. Moreover, he devised an under-hand scheme for becoming supreme, which consisted in assigning shares to two subservient friends, Captain Thomson and Mr. Longford, whose approval he could count upon should they become partners in the management.

While the scheme was still in embryo the actors refused to play, and it is supposed that this theatrical strike was instigated by Sheridan because, instead

"When general plaudits speak the
fable o'er

Which mute attention had approved
before,

Though ruder spirits love the accus-
tomed jest

Which chases sorrow from the vulgar
breast,

Still hearts refined their saddened
tint retain

The sigh is pleasure, and the jest is
pain !

Scarce have they smiles to honour
grace or wit

Though Roscius spoke the verse
himself had writ !

Thus through the time, when vernal
fruits receive

The grateful showers that hang on
April's eve

Though every coarser stem of forest
Throws with the morning beam its

dews to earth, [soon
Ne'er does the gentle rose revive so

But, bathed in Nature's tears, it
droops till noon.

"Oh ! could the Muse one simple
moral teach !

From scenes like these which all who
heard might reach !

Thou child of sympathy, whoe'er thou
art,

Who with Assyria's Queen hast wept
thy part,

Go, search where keener woes de-
mand relief,

Go, while thy heart yet beats with
fancied grief,

Thy lip still conscious of the recent
sigh,

The graceful tear still lingering in
thy eye,

Go and on real misery bestow

The blessed effusion of fictitious
woe !

So shall our Muse, supreme of all
the Nine,

Deserve, indeed, the title of divine !

Virtue shall own her favour from
above,

And Pity greet her with a sister's
love."

of expressing concern, he treated it as a good practical joke. The result was that Captain Thomson and Mr. Longford declined to sign an agreement, and Mr. Lacy was compelled to make a public apology for his conduct. He had been completely foiled in his attempt to outwit Sheridan, who displayed a fertility of resource which Garrick might not have shown in the circumstances, combined with a boldness which re-assured Mr. Linley, who was both nervous and downcast and to whom Sheridan wrote in the following sprightly and sensible terms :—" You represent your situation of mind between hopes and fears. I am afraid I should argue in vain (as I have often on this point before) were I to tell you that it is always better to encourage the former than the latter. It may be very prudent to mix a little fear by way of alloy with a good solid basis of hope ; but you, on the contrary, always deal in apprehension by the pound, and take confidence by the grain and spread as thin as leaf gold. In fact though a metaphor mayn't explain it, the truth is, that, in all undertakings which depend chiefly on ourselves, the surest way not to fail is to determine to succeed."

The last sentence supplies a key to Sheridan's character. He was then twenty-five and sanguine ; his father-in-law was desponding and fifty-two. Inexperience of the buffets of fortune justifies boundless indulgence in the pleasures of hope. Yet, when Sheridan's years were even greater in number than Mr. Linley's, he still dealt in confidence by the pound and apprehension by the grain ;

continuing as determined to command success as he had been in his younger days, still facing obstacles and confronting the strokes of adverse fate with the dash and self-confidence of a boy. Though often beaten, he remained buoyant and undaunted.

His infant son Tom is repeatedly mentioned in the letters to his father-in-law, the playfully exaggerated language which Sheridan employed proving the intensity of his paternal pride. When the child was but nine months old he wrote to Mr. Linley, "Your grandson is a very magnificent fellow;"¹ the letter from which the following passage is extracted ends thus:—"Betsy is very well and on the point of giving Tom up to feed like a Christian and a gentleman, or, in other words, of weaning, waining or weening him. As for the young gentleman himself, his progress is so rapid, that one may plainly see the astonishment the sun is in of a morning, at the improvement of the night."

He expurgated Vanbrugh's *Relapse*, renamed it *A Trip to Scarborough* and put it on the stage at Drury Lane on the 24th of February, 1777. Garrick

¹ Moore explains in a footnote to this letter that the grandson was "Sheridan's first child, Thomas, born in the preceding year," that is 1774, whereas the child was born on the 18th of March, 1775. The reader of Mr. Fitzgerald's "Lives of the Sheridans" will have vague and varied notions as to this boy's birthday. At p. 325 of the 2nd volume, he writes: "It is a bizarre circumstance that he [Tom Sheridan] should have come into the world on the day that his father's play of *The School for Scandal* was produced. That should have been a happy omen. This auspicious day, as we have seen, was March 17, 1775." At p. 160 of the first volume it is said of *The School for Scandal's* first performance, "This famous, memorable night was May 8th, 1777."

wrote a prologue to this comedy and it may be inferred that he approved of its new form. It has been frequently alleged that playgoers were dissatisfied and indignant when it was produced. "An Octogenarian" writes disparagingly of this revival and does so in the character of an eyewitness. If present, he must have been the youngest among the audience, as he was then but two years old. A contributor to *Blackwood's Magazine*, who saw the piece acted, deserves greater trust than a narrator at second-hand. He states from personal knowledge that "there were strong managerial reasons" for Sheridan's conduct, adding:—"In the first place the piece cost him no trouble; in the next it was well fitted for his company, by whom it was excellently performed; and, in the next, it gave an opportunity for producing, in one night, three most remarkable actresses, Mrs. Abington, Miss Farren, and Mrs. Robinson—the first at the very top of her profession for comic humour—the second, of surpassing loveliness and elegance—and the third, one of the most beautiful women in London. . . . It was a temporary expedient, and, as well as I can remember, successful."¹

Though the adaptation of Vanbrugh's comedy gave Sheridan little trouble, the reverse is true of the work which was represented for the first time at Drury Lane on the 8th of May, 1777, and is one that "Time's effacing finger" has done little as yet to mar or destroy. This was *The School for Scandal*.

¹ "Reminiscences of R. B. Sheridan."—*Blackwood's Magazine*, vol. xx., p. 34.

The comedy narrowly escaped suppression, as the Lord Chamberlain had actually declined to allow its representation. Eighteen years afterwards, the circumstances were narrated by Sheridan in the House of Commons, and, speaking there on the 3rd of December, 1793, he said :—"On the night before the first appearance of *The School for Scandal*, he was informed that it could not be performed as a license was refused. It happened at this time there was the famous City contest for the office of Chamberlain between Wilkes and Hopkins. The latter had been charged with practices similar to those of Moses, the Jew, in lending money to young men under age, and it was supposed that the character in the play was levelled at him, in order to injure him in his contest, in which he was supported by Ministerial influence. In the warmth of a contested election, the piece was represented as a factious and seditious opposition to a Court candidate. He went, however, to Lord Hertford, then Lord Chamberlain, who laughed at the affair, and gave the license."¹

Those who had read the comedy before its representation were enthusiastic in their admiration and Garrick's hopes ran high as to the reception which would be accorded. No new piece had pleased him better since he listened with delight to Mrs. Thomas Sheridan's comedy, *The Discovery*. Garrick attended

¹ Sheridan's "Speeches," vol. iii., p. 17. If Sheridan's biographers had attentively read his speeches, I should not have been the first who directed attention, as I did in "Wilkes, Sheridan, Fox," to this circumstance in connexion with the conduct of the Examiner of Plays.

the rehearsals. He felt confident that *The School*, as he always termed it, would be a great success, if carefully acted, and he was as much concerned about the piece as if it had been the offspring of his own lively brain and his high reputation had been staked upon the issue. He wrote the prologue. Despite the warmth of the welcome, he was not perfectly satisfied with the first night's performance, being most anxious that some trifling defects should be amended.

The public was not captious, however, and competent critics affirmed that they had witnessed a triumph of good acting as well as a marvel of polished writing. Horace Walpole was astonished to see more parts filled to perfection in *The School for Scandal* than he had done in many other plays, and he pronounced the whole to be "a marvellous resurrection of the stage." Charles Lamb accounted it "some compensation for growing old to have seen *The School for Scandal* in its glory. . . . No other piece was ever so completely cast in all its parts as this Manager's Comedy."

Discordant notes mingled in the chorus of praise with which Sheridan's comedy was hailed. Fault-finders by nature are always ready with their sneers in the presence of any beautiful work, while they unwittingly condemn themselves when censuring what is praiseworthy. It is sad and strange that the worshippers of the great Goddess Detraction, whom Charles Kingsley pointedly characterized and rebuked in a memorable passage,¹ should have made

¹ Sir Walter Raleigh tells Edmund Spenser, with reference to what Amyas Leigh had said in his praise: "Hearken to him, Edmund! He will know better when he has outgrown this same

Sheridan the subject of their unworthy arts. On the first night the comedy was performed, a silly poetaster who was contemptuously styled "Della Cruscan" Merry, peevishly remarked of the scene at Lady Sneerwell's, "I wish these people would have done talking and let the play begin." Sheridan's own father dishonoured himself by denying merit to the play and alleging that his son had merely reproduced Charles and Joseph Surface from prototypes in his own heart. A writer in our day has said that Sheridan plagiarized from Suckling the song which is sung at the entertainment in Charles Surface's house, and he appears to think so meanly of Sheridan as a versifier and dramatist as to hold him incapable of drawing upon his resources for good verses and good points.

Sheridan's first biographer was comprehensive in his blame. He brought against him an accusation which is quite as baseless and scandalous as anything that Sir Benjamin Backbite uttered with great gusto and assurance. Dr. Watkins referred to unnamed critics who admitted the superlative excellence of the comedy, but, "who analyzed it with severity as being rather an effusion of the imagination than

callow trick of honesty, and learnt of the great Goddess Detraction how to show himself wiser than the wise by pointing out to the world the fool's motley which peeps through the rents in the philosopher's cloak. Go to, lad! Slander thy equals, envy thy betters, pray for an eye which sees spots in every sun, and for a vulture's nose to scent carrion in every rosebed. If thy friend win a battle, show that he has needlessly thrown away his men; if he lose one, hint that he sold it; if he rise to a place, argue favour; if he fall from one, argue divine justice."—"Westward Ho!" vol. vi., p. 183, ed. 1881.

a picture of life and manners." To charge a playwright with an excess of imaginative power is to pay him an indirect yet a splendid compliment, but the last thing which would have entered the mind of Dr. Watkins was intentional praise of Sheridan's intellectual capacity. He attributed the comedy, on the authority of anonymous informers, to Mrs. Sheridan. Not satisfied, however, with alleging it to be the product of her pen, he perpetrated the absurdity of finding a second author for it, and did so on the authority of Isaac Reed, who had roundly "asserted that the play was written by a young lady, the daughter of a merchant in Thames Street [whose name and the number of his house are judiciously withheld], that, at the beginning of the season when Mr. Sheridan commenced his management, the manuscript was put into his hands for his judgment, soon after which the fair writer, who was then in a stage of decline, went to Bristol Hot Wells, where she died." Dr. Watkins maintained, with almost incredible obtuseness, that the truthfulness of this statement is confirmed by Sheridan neither having repudiated it, nor having had the comedy printed with his name on the title-page.¹

It is seldom that a circumstantial falsehood, even when Sheridan is the victim, tallies so closely as this one with Crabtree's minute account of the imaginary duel between Charles Surface and Sir Peter Teazle:—"Sir Peter forced Charles to take a pistol and they fired, it seems, pretty well together. Charles' shot took effect, as I tell you, and Sir Peter's missed; but, what is very extraordinary, the

¹ "Memoirs of Sheridan," by Dr. Watkins, vol. i., pp. 217-223.

ball struck against a little bronze Shakespeare that stood over a fire-place, grazed out of the window at a right angle, and wounded the postman who was just coming to the door with a double letter from Northamptonshire." Fictions in biography resemble those noxious weeds which can be cut down but cannot be extirpated. The production of the manuscript of *The School for Scandal* might not have convinced a man of Dr. Watkins' mental calibre that Sheridan was the actual author; as he would probably maintain that the work of the anonymous and consumptive young lady had been copied and then destroyed to conceal the fraud.

Even Moore blunderingly accepted the foolish charges of plagiarism as well-founded, and then set up a preposterous defence. He considered that Sheridan would have been as fully justified as Molière was in exclaiming, "*C'est mon bien, et je le reprends partout ou je le trouve.*" It is possible that Molière uttered these words and it is certain that their true import is quite different from the assumed one. The first two scenes in Cyrano de Bergerac's *Le Pedant Joué* appear in Molière's *Fourberies de Scapin*, these scenes having been written by Molière when young and Cyrano's college friend, and in reproducing them he was, as he said, simply resuming possession of his own property. Sheridan was as innocent as Molière of intentional plagiarism, and he stood as little in need of copying from any predecessor. Much misplaced ingenuity has been expended in detecting the sources from which Shakespeare may have obtained hints for the tragedy of *Hamlet*; Milton may have been familiar with *The*

Fall of Adam by Grotius ; it is indisputable that Marlow wrote *Dr. Faustus* many years before Goethe's birth, yet *Hamlet* and *Paradise Lost* and *Faust* are inseparably associated with the names of Shakespeare, Milton and Goethe. I am surprised that those who have ignorantly branded Sheridan as a vile plagiarist should have omitted to point out that the name "Crabtree" occurs in *Peregrine Pickle*, while I admit that the name "Surface" was probably taken from the lodging-house keeper who bears it in his mother's unacted and unpublished *Journey to Bath*. Writers who delight in enlarging on Sheridan's alleged appropriations have had most of his opportunities, yet their names do not rank with his in English literature.

The genesis of *The School for Scandal* has been exhibited in great detail by Moore ; indeed, he printed many passages which did not merit reproduction. He would have rendered greater service to readers by quoting the following instructive passage, written by Miss Lefanu on the authority of her mother, Sheridan's younger sister, with reference to the calumnies of Dr. Watkins :—
"The whole story of the supposed manner in which the play of *The School for Scandal* came into Sheridan's hands is perfectly groundless, the writer of these lines having frequently heard him speak on the subject long before the play appeared ; many of the characters and incidents related to persons known to them both, and were laughingly talked over with his family." Miss Lefanu says her mother told her that :—"Before he put pen to paper, the

fable, as perfectly conceived and matured in his mind, was communicated to his friends; and the expression he made use of, described at once the completeness and unity of his plan. 'The comedy is finished. I have nothing to do but to write it.'¹

Sheridan is not the first who has found the ordeal very terrible of committing to paper, with satisfaction to himself, what he had conceived, and considered that he had completed. He was an unsparing critic of himself, having a most fastidious taste and an almost unapproachable ideal in his mind. He wrote and recast many a passage in the comedy before allowing it to pass from him, and the time for its performance approached without the finishing touches having been given. The foolish story is current that the actors were kept waiting for their several parts while the author was rapidly dashing off scene after scene. How, then, could Garrick have read the play before it was put in rehearsal, and how could the Examiner of Plays have passed an opinion adverse to its being licensed? The concluding scenes may have required greater labour than the others and have caused him more anxiety. He probably felt that he had but a limited time for further polishing, and he may have been haunted with apprehension lest the work as a whole had fallen below his own standard. But an end had to be made: despite his reluctance and hesitation, the final touches could no longer be postponed. He is

¹ "Memoirs of Mrs. Frances Sheridan," with remarks on a late life of R. B. Sheridan, pp. 409, 410. This work was published in 1824, and a copy was in Moore's possession.

said to have written at the bottom of the last sheet, "Finished at last. Thank God! R. B. Sheridan." It is also said that Mr. Hopkins, the prompter at the theatre, added "Amen."¹ Whether this be fact or fable cannot now be determined.

Sheridan's early experiences and reading supplied him with material for dramatic use. Much of the real life of the period in which he lived is preserved in his plays; but the presentment is no slavish copy devoid of artistic method and adornment. That he was an artist in his realism is shown in the choice as well as the treatment of his subjects. The naturalism which reproduces what is coarse and vile in human nature with the fidelity and harshness of a photograph, is thoroughly inartistic as well as utterly repulsive. The first sketch of *The School for Scandal* which he committed to paper and thought of calling "The Slanderers," contains the following hints under the heading,—“A Pump-Room scene:—

“Friendly caution to the newspapers.

“It is whispered—

“She is a constant attendant at Church, and very frequently takes Dr. McBrawne home with her.

“Mr. Worthy is very good to the girl:—for my part, I dare swear he has no ill.intention.

¹ Moore is the authority for this statement, and he had the manuscript of the comedy in his custody. This manuscript, with other family papers, passed into the hands of Sheridan's grandson, who has written a note describing its condition, in which he says, "The abstraction of the last leaf of the copy-book which concluded the play, is deeply to be regretted." The Sheridan papers which are now in strange hands, or have been lost, never lack interest or value.

"What! Major Wesley's Miss Montague?"

"Lud, Ma'am, the match is certainly broke—no creature knows the cause; some say a flaw in the lady's character, and others, in the gentleman's fortune.

"To be sure they do say—

"I hate to repeat what I hear.

"She was inclined to be a little too plump before she went.

"The most intrepid blush;—I've known her complexion stand fire for an hour together.

"'She has twins.' How ill-natured! As I hope to be saved, Ma'am, she had but one! and that a little starved brat not worth mentioning."

What Sheridan decided to cancel is even more noteworthy than the striking passages which remain. A commonplace and dismal writer is always enamoured of his work, and lacks the sense and courage to follow Sydney Smith's advice and improve it by striking out whatever he deems to be particularly fine. This is the rare and difficult art which Pope styled the art to blot. Sheridan was a thorough master of it. He originally put the following soliloquy into the mouth of him whom he first called Old Teazle, and to whom he gave the Christian name of Solomon, but who is now familiarly known and sincerely commiserated under the designation of Sir Peter Teazle. If one of Sheridan's contemporary dramatic rivals had penned what I am about to quote, he might have allowed the passage to stand and been proud of it:—"In the year '44, I married my first wife; the wedding was at the end of the year—aye, 'twas in December; yet before Ann. Dom., '45, I repented.

A month before, we swore we preferred each other to the whole world,—perhaps we spoke truth ; but when we came to love each other till death, then I am sure we lied. Well Fortune owed me a good turn ; in 1748 she died. Ah ! silly Solomon, in '52 I find thee married again ! Here, too, is a catalogue of ills—Thomas, born February 12 ; Jane, born Jan. 6 ; so they go on till the number of five. However, by death I stand credited but by one. Well, Margery, rest her soul ! was a queer creature ; when she was gone, I felt awkward at first, and being sensible that wishes availed nothing, I often wished for her return. For ten years more I kept my senses and lived single. Oh, blockhead, dolt, Solomon ! Within this twelve month thou art married again—married to a woman thirty years younger than thyself ; a fashionable woman. Yet I took her with caution ; she had been educated in the country ; but now she has more extravagance than the daughter of an Earl, more levity than a Countess. What a defect it is in our laws, that a man who has once been branded in the forehead should be hanged for the second offence.”¹

¹ The final version will be read with enhanced interest after the first draft. Sir Peter Teazle thus soliloquises in the second scene of the first act :—“When an old bachelor marries a young wife, what is he to expect ? ’Tis now six months since Lady Teazle made me the happiest of men—and I have been the most miserable dog ever since ! We tift a little going to church, and fairly quarrelled before the bells had done ringing. I was more than once nearly choked with gall during the honeymoon, and I had lost all comfort in life before my friends had done wishing me joy. Yet I chose with caution—a girl bred wholly in the country, who never knew luxury beyond one silk gown, nor dissipation

The four verses which Sir Benjamin Backbite professed to have written upon seeing Lady Betty Curricie and her ponies, were extracted from thirty-six which Moore supposes Sheridan to have penned in ridicule of a fashionable woman of the day. My own conjecture is that they were designed to serve as a rhyming epistle from a lady in Town to her friend in the country. The version printed by Moore has been edited to an unjustifiable extent. It was his duty to reproduce the original and then, if he thought fit, to suggest emendations. I shall give the lines as they appear, in his boyish hand, and Moore's changes in a note :—

“Then behind all my hair is done up in a Plat,
And so like a Cornet's tucked under my Hat.
Then I mount on my Palfrey as gay as a Lark—
And followed by John, *take the Dust* in high Park.
In the way I am met by some smart Macaroni,¹
Who rides by my side on a little Bay Poney.

beyond the annual gala of a race ball. Yet she now plays her part in all the extravagant fopperies of fashion and the Town, with as ready a grace as if she had never seen a bush or a grass-plot out of Grosvenor Square! I am sneered at by all my acquaintance, and paragraphed in the newspapers. She dissipates my fortune, and contradicts all my humours; yet the worst of it is, I doubt I love her, or I never should bear all this. However, I'll never be weak enough to own it.”

¹ A Macaroni, in Sheridan's day, was afterwards styled a Buck or a Dandy, and would now be called a Swell or a Johnnie in England. His designation in America would be a Masher or a Dude; in the Old Colony days, he was commemorated in the well-known doggerel lines :—

“Yankee Doodle came to town
On a little poney,
Stuck a feather in his cap
And called it—Macaroni.”

No sturdy Hybernian with shoulders so wide
But as Taper and slim as the Ponies they Ride
Their legs are as slim and their shoulders no wider
Dear swelter [*sic*] little both Poney and Rider !
But sometimes when hotter I order my Chaise—
And manage myself my two little Greys—
Sure never were seen two such sweet little Ponies
Other horses are clowns, these macaronies.
And to give them this title I'm sure isn't wrong,
Their legs are so slim and their tails are as long.
In Kensington Gardens to strut up and Down
On foot was the Fashion before you left town—
The Thing's well enough when allowance is made
For the size of the Trees and the Depth of the shade ;
But their spreading leaves such a shelter affords
To these noisy impertinent creatures called Birds
Whose ridiculous chirruping ruins the scene,
Put the country before and gives me the Spleen.
Yet tho' still 'tis too rural to come near the mark
We all herd in one walk, and that nearest the Park,
Where with ease we may see as we pass by the Wicket
The chimneys of Nights-Bridge and our footmen at Cricket—
I must tho' in justice declare that the Grass—
Which tormented our steps is diminished apace—
In a little time more 'twill be brown and as flat
As the sand at Fauxhall or as Ranelagh Mat—
Improving thus fast—perhaps by degrees
We may see rolls and butter spread under the Trees—
With a small pretty Band in each seat of the Walk—
To play pretty Tunes and enliven our Talk.”¹

¹ The tenth line is thus interpreted by Moore, “Dear sweet little creatures both pony and rider”; in line 16 he writes “so” instead of “as long”; for “strut,” in line 17, he gives “stroll”; in line 21 he substitutes “But the spread of their leaves” for Sheridan’s, “But their spreading leaves”; in line 25 he changes “near” into “nearer”; in line 27 Sheridan distinctly wrote “where” while he writes “there”; in line 30 he substitutes “worn by our feet” for “tormented our steps,” and in the last line he changes “pretty”

Mr. Ridgway wished to publish *The School for Scandal* and offered five hundred guineas for a corrected copy. Sheridan promised to prepare his last and greatest comedy for publication, but nineteen years elapsed and Mr. Ridgway was still waiting for the manuscript. Meanwhile, the acting version had been printed in Dublin, the text being taken from a copy of it which Sheridan presented to his elder sister and she sold to Mr. Roger, of the Theatre Royal there, for one hundred guineas and free admission to the theatre for herself and her family. When importuned by Mr. Ridgway for the revised manuscript, Sheridan always replied that he had never been able to satisfy himself as to the version which he wished to be published, and the comedy, with any of his final corrections, has not yet been given to the world.

I have been fortunate enough to find, among a mass of tattered and begrimed papers which had been put aside as worthless, two acts of *The School for Scandal* prepared by Sheridan for publication. The copy which he corrected had been made before the comedy was first represented, and in which some lines were suppressed. The insertions and alterations must have been executed in Sheridan's later life, as the dark ink of his pen is in striking contrast to the faded ink of the manuscript. Though the changes are few, they are all characteristic, and they

into "little." The concluding line is a touch of Nature; the talk of many ladies in the open air is commonly "enlivened," or increased in volume while a band plays, till the sound of shrill voices overpowers that of the music.

testify to Sheridan's artistic striving after finish in expression. He did not neglect even the stage directions, and he improved them in every case. In the first scene of the first act the stage direction in the current version is, "Lady Sneerwell discovered at her Toilet." No one has ever asked, "why discovered?" In the manuscript which he revised, the original words are:—"Lady Sneerwell's house. Lady Sneerwell at the Dressing-table"—Sheridan substituted the following:—"A Dressing-room in Lady Sneerwell's house. Lady Sneerwell at her Toilet."

Snake says in the first scene of the current version that Sir Peter Teazle "acted as a kind of guardian" to the Surfaces. Sheridan saw that he made a slip; as a man is either a guardian or he is not, "a kind of one" being an absurdity. I shall give the two versions side by side.

Current Version.

"SNAKE. Here are two young men to whom Sir Peter has acted as a kind of guardian since their father's death: the eldest possessing the most amiable character, and universally well spoken of, the youngest, the most dissipated and extravagant young fellow in the kingdom."

Revised Version.

"SNAKE. Here are two young men to whom Sir Peter has acted as guardian since their father's death: the elder possessing the most amiable character, and universally well spoken of, the other, the most dissipated and extravagant young fellow in the kingdom."

Having said that the elder was Lady Sneerwell's avowed admirer, Snake continues:

"Now on the face of these circumstances, it is utterly unaccountable to me why you, the

"Now on the face of these circumstances, which I am sure I state fairly, it is utterly unac-

widow of a City Knight, with a good jointure, should not close with the passion of a man of such character and expectations as Mr. Surface, and still more so why you should be so uncommonly earnest to destroy the mutual attachment subsisting between his brother Charles and Maria."

countable to me why you—a widow—your own mistress, and independent in your fortune—should not close with the addresses of a man of such character and expectations as Mr. Surface, and still more so why you should be so uncommonly earnest to destroy the mutual attachment subsisting between his brother Charles and Maria."

Sheridan perceived, what none of the critics of his comedy has pointed out, that Snake was both indiscreet and uncomplimentary in addressing Lady Sneerwell as "the widow of a City Knight" and that for him to advise her "to close with the passion of a man," was to speak foolishly. In these slight touches and several others his painstaking nature as a writer is made manifest. Another example is the following exclamation of Lady Sneerwell:—

"Heavens! how dull you are! Cannot you surmise the weakness which I hitherto, through shame, have concealed even from you? Must I confess that Charles, that libertine, that extravagant, that bankrupt in fortune and reputation—that he it is for whom I am thus anxious and malicious, to gain whom I would sacrifice everything?"

"Heavens! how dull you are! Cannot you surmise the folly which I hitherto thro' shame have concealed even from you? Where is the sagacity that should have almost anticipated my own consciousness of my weakness? Must I confess that Charles, that libertine, that extravagant, that bankrupt in fortune and reputation—that he it is for whom I am thus anxious and malicious, and to gain whom I would sacrifice everything?"

Among the minor changes, I may note the following. When Maria enters and Lady Sneerwell asks, "What's the matter?" the reply in the current version is "I slipped out and ran hither to avoid them," meaning her odious lover, Sir Benjamin Backbite, and her guardians; whereas in the revised one she is made to say:—"I made my escape and have run hither to avoid them."

A servant enters and announces Mrs. Candour in these words: "Madam, Mrs. Candour is below, and if your Ladyship is at leisure will leave her carriage." Lady Sneerwell says in the current version, "Beg her to walk in." Sheridan perceived that, as Mrs. Candour was seated in her carriage, it was a mistake to ask her "to walk in," so he altered the phrase to, "I shall be happy to see her." When Crabtree states that Miss Nicely is going to be married to her footman, Mrs. Candour affirms that no one could believe such a story of so prudent a lady, whereupon Sir Benjamin Backbite observes, in the current version,—“Oh, Lud! Ma'am, that's the very reason 'twas believed at once— She has always been so cautious;” this has been revised so as to read “Oh, Lud! Ma'am, you have mentioned the very circumstance that made it be believed at once. Yes—she has always been so cautious.” The corrections are all obvious improvements and the reader must wonder why none of the editors of the comedy thought of suggesting them.¹

Sheridan's fourth and last original play was represented for the first time on the 30th of October,

¹ I purpose printing the revised version of the comedy.

1779. Within six years he had produced two comedies and an opera which are among the best of their class in English literature. He now added to them a farce, which was the dream of his boyhood and, like his comedies, is incomparably superior to anything in a similar vein which has been written since. This is the inimitable *Critic*.

Commentators who labour to demonstrate that Sheridan was utterly destitute of originality and had no other merit than the contemptible one of appropriating and refurbishing the productions of his predecessors, have taken needless pains to point out that *The Critic* was forestalled by the Duke of Buckingham's *Rehearsal*. Though the general character of the two farces is the same, they yet differ in detail. In proof of the indebtedness of the later to the earlier playwright, the following passage is always adduced. It occurs in the 1st scene of the second act of *The Rehearsal*, where the gentleman usher, and the physician to the two Kings of Brentford enter and speak in these terms :—

“PHYSICIAN. Sir, to conclude.

“SMITH. What before he begins?

“BAYES. No, Sir, you must know they have been talking of this a pretty while without.

“SMITH. Where? In the Tying-room?

“BAYES. Why, aye, Sir.”

In the 2nd scene of the 2nd act of *The Critic*, Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Christopher Hatton enter and say :—

“SIR CHRISTOPHER. True gallant Raleigh.

“DANGLE. What! they have been talking before?

“PUFF. O yes; all the way as they came along.”

The passage in *The Rehearsal* was perfectly familiar to the audience which applauded *The Critic* in 1779, and Sheridan's contemporaries were shrewd enough to notice, what commentators of later days have strangely overlooked, that a parody on one of the ridiculous situations in *The Rehearsal* had been penned by Sheridan. Till *The Critic* was put on the stage, few farces were more popular than *The Rehearsal*. Drury Lane Theatre was filled whenever Garrick appeared in the part of Bayes. After *The Critic* had found favour with playgoers, *The Rehearsal* ceased to attract and amuse them. John Adolphus, the historian, who saw it played at Covent Garden in 1785, records that the house was "miserably filled" and the audience "totally dissatisfied," adding, "Sheridan's *Critic*, which now held complete possession of the Town, was so identified in manner with *The Rehearsal*, so transcendent in wit, so powerful in personal allusion, that to bring forward Buckingham's Farce, seemed rather like a blurred imitation of Sheridan than a representation of the original form from which that great wit had drawn his idea."¹

Though actually a farce, *The Critic* was designed with a patriotic intent. Shortly before its production, the combined fleets of France and Spain were cruising off the western coast of England and a hostile landing at Plymouth was feared. Thus the reference in *The Critic* to the Armada in "A Tragedy Rehearsed" had an application which none

¹ "Recollections" of John Adolphus, pp. 77, 78.

could miss and with which all were pleased, while the triumphant procession at the close, that is omitted as surplusage when the piece is represented now, was thoroughly relished in 1779 by the spectators. Contemporary opinion differed as to the dramatic merit of the work. One of Horace Walpole's informants considered that it was "admirably acted": in Walpole's own opinion, it seemed "wondrously flat and old and a poor imitation," yet he pronounced Fitzpatrick's prologue, "charming." Just as the success of *The Rehearsal* was chiefly due to the cleverness of the actor who filled the part of Bayes, so that of *The Critic* depends on the part of Mr. Puff being filled by an actor of remarkable and peculiar talent. Garrick excelled as Bayes. In the lifetime of the present generation no one has been superior to Charles Mathews as Mr. Puff. The vitality of the piece is evinced by the frequency with which quotations are made from it in current talk and writing, yet it now pleases more in the library than on the stage. For brilliancy of wit, however, it is supreme among farces.

Garrick died early in the year that Sheridan's last original piece was produced. A Monody was written by his successor in the management of Drury Lane. It is one of Sheridan's failures. He was more at home in satire than in pathos, and this is exemplified by his prologue to Hannah Moore's tragedy, *The Fatal Falsehood*, which was put on the stage in 1779 and had the short life of three representations. Dr. Watkins once deviated into making a just remark concerning Sheridan when he said that the

following lines, descriptive of a blue-stockings's toilet,
“ would have done credit to Swift ” :—

“ What motley cares Corilla's mind perplex,
While maids and metaphors conspire to vex !
In studious *deshabille* behold her sit,
A lettered gossip and a housewife wit
At once invoking, though for different views,
Her Gods, her cook, her milliner and muse.
Round her strewed room a frippery chaos lies,
A chequered wreck of notable and wise.
Bills, books, caps, couplets, combs, in varied mass,
Oppress the toilet and obscure the glass.
Unfinished here an epigram is laid,
And there a mantua-maker's bill unpaid.
Here new-born plays foretaste the Town's applause,
There dormant patterns pine for future gauze.
A moral essay here is all her care,
A satire next, and then a bill of fare.
A scene she now projects, and now a dish,
Here ‘ Act the First,’ and here ‘ Remove with Fish !’
Now, while this eye in a fine frenzy rolls,
That soberly casts up a bill for coals ;
Black pins and daggers in one leaf she sticks,
And tears, and threads, and bowls, and thimbles mix.”

Sheridan's productivity and fame as an original dramatist culminated in 1779. He was then approaching what Dante and Goethe felt and proclaimed to be that mid-stage in life's journey when a retrospect is commonly fraught with sad recollections of wasted opportunities and shattered hopes. However, he had but little cause for regret and no reason to despond. Every step in his course had brought him nearer the goal of his youthful desires since Halhed and he were mapping out the future and were brimful of confidence that brilliant triumphs,

accompanied by wealth and fame, would be their ultimate portion. The most sanguine anticipations of his imaginative boyhood were fulfilled when he was still in his prime.

As manager of Drury Lane Theatre he held a highly honourable position. It was one which Garrick had glorified. Garrick had rendered as great service to the stage as a profession as to the art of acting, and Dr. Johnson was fully justified in saying that "his profession made Garrick rich, and he made his profession respectable." He had to exert as much tact behind the curtain, as ability before it, to secure the esteem and command the respect of his contemporaries. The capacity for generalship which enables a soldier to lead an army to victory is also required in the management of a theatre, and it was possessed in as large a measure by Garrick as it is at the present day by those actors and managers who have preserved and illustrated his traditions.

Sheridan's progress had been unparalleled hitherto and his success astounding, and he could proudly style himself the architect of his own fortune. His father had not aided him with money, counsel or countenance; on the contrary, his father's rabid aversion was the bitter drop in the cup which the outer world thought to be overflowing with nectar. Mr. Sheridan's envious thoughts of his son's good fortune might be excusable. * That son had reached almost at a bound the pre-eminence which he himself had vainly striven to attain during many laborious and melancholy years. Fate has decreed that the

name of Thomas Sheridan, the actor who considered himself Garrick's equal ; the compiler of a Dictionary which was to rival Dr. Johnson's ; the professor of elocution who confidently hoped to regenerate the age in which he lived by teaching rhetoric, is now but the shadow of a shade and is best known as that borne by the father of a son whose extraordinary talents Thomas Sheridan did not discover and whose immortal works he obstinately depreciated.

Sheridan placed his father in the responsible post of stage manager of Drury Lane Theatre, which he held for three years only, being chargeable during that period with the inexcusable blunder of snubbing Garrick, when the latter was ready with advice and assistance to promote the success of *The School for Scandal*, and with the graver shortcoming of being unequal to his duties. Sheridan's father-in-law, Mr. Linley, did not display greater prudence or discretion, yet, after calumniating Garrick, he had the grace to apologize, and the vanity to affirm that he could not tell a lie. When Sheridan most required help, his direst foes were his debtors.

A noteworthy exception must be made. He possessed in his wife everything which man could wish for. She was his good genius as well as a paragon among women. The accounts of Drury Lane Theatre were kept by her with irreproachable care and neatness, and so long as she was able to give her time to this task, method and order prevailed and prosperity reigned. Moreover, she relieved her husband of the irksome labour of reading the manu-

scripts of unfledged and presumptuous authors. Toiling through this arid rubbish is as trying an ordeal as walking through the sands of the Libyan desert at mid-day. Breaking stones in a workhouse yard for the repair of public roads, or turning an aimless crank within prison walls is the penalty of the casual pauper or the offender against the law, yet either burden is light and enlivening compared with reading unpublished plays or novels by untried hands with a view to ascertain whether they have any merit.

The world went well with Sheridan now. He could count upon a yearly income of several thousand pounds. It rested with himself to decide whether, when his race was run, the fortune which he left behind him should not far exceed Garrick's. Unfortunately, perhaps, he found it as hard to save money as Garrick did to spend it. He lived as sumptuously and extravagantly as his paternal grandfather had ever done. His guests censured his recklessness, yet, as the Rev. W. Harness remarks, "they never refused his invitations."¹ His wife made these entertainments doubly attractive with song. Their lavish hospitality was freely reciprocated. Every person of note was glad to welcome, in return, the great dramatist and his fascinating wife.

Frances Burney has graphically recorded the impression which they made in society. She met them at Mrs. Cholmondeley's on the 27th of January, 1779, and wrote that she "was absolutely charmed with Mrs. Sheridan," adding, "I think her quite as beautiful

¹ "The Literary Life" of the Rev. W. Harness, p. 151.

as ever, and even more captivating : for she has now a look of ease and happiness that animates her whole face. Miss Linley [who soon after these words were written became Mrs. Tickell] was with her : she is very handsome, but nothing near her sister : the elegance of Mrs. Sheridan's beauty is unequalled by any I ever saw, except Mrs. Crewe. I was pleased with her in all respects. She is much more lively and agreeable than I had any idea of finding her : she was very gay, and very unaffected, and totally free from airs of any kind."¹

On this occasion Frances Burney made Sheridan's acquaintance. She was in the full blossom of popularity as the author of *Evelina*, her first and most admirable novel. She delighted in receiving and recording compliments, and her special favourites were those who lavished them upon her without stint. Sheridan charmed the vain little authoress by saying to her, as she carefully noted, "I have long expected to see in Miss Burney a lady of the gravest appearance, with the quickest parts," and by repeatedly styling *Evelina*, "a most surprising book." She candidly states in her *Diary* that unexpected praise from such a man gratified her exceedingly, while her opinion of his taste and judgment was enhanced when he entreated her to write a comedy and promised that, if she complied with his request, he would put it on the stage. With these flattering

¹ The subject of talk being the Opera and Pacchierotti's name being mentioned, Miss Burney states that "Mrs Sheridan declared she could not hear him without tears, and that he was the first Italian singer who ever affected her to such a degree."

thoughts present to her mind, she drew the following portrait of him :—" Mr. Sheridan has a very fine figure, and a good though I don't think a handsome face. He is tall, and very upright, and his appearance and address are at once manly and fashionable, without the smallest tincture of foppery or modish graces. In short I like him vastly, and think him every way worthy his beautiful companion. . . . He evidently adores her, and she as evidently idolizes him. The world has by no means done him justice."¹

At the theatre, Sheridan had become a monarch ; in society, he shone as a star of the first magnitude. His career was nearly as marvellous and unprecedented as that of any hero depicted by Queen Scheherezade when nightly amusing her husband with a pleasant tale in order to lengthen her days. Dr. Johnson and Edmund Burke were the greatest among contemporary men of letters, yet the success of neither was comparable to Sheridan's in rapidity and character. He had risen within six eventful years from being noteworthy as the young husband of the accomplished and lovely Miss Linley to be the acknowledged chief among living dramatists. The cleverest and most beautiful women of the time eagerly sought his company and were flattered by his notice. All men were glad to make his personal acquaintance. Thus, at the age of twenty-eight, he basked amid the smiles of fortune and, as Bunyan might have phrased it, he walked in silver slippers in the sunshine, and with applause.

¹ "Diary and Letters" of Madame D'Arblay, vol. i., pp. 182-185.

Was it his duty, then, "to rest and be thankful"? Had an appropriate or the final halting-place been reached? Those who were acquainted with all the circumstances and who deemed it unwise in him to tempt fate again, might have answered in the affirmative. They would have been justified in urging, with great plausibility, that his position was enviable and envied, honourable and secure; that, with an income adequate for the gratification of all reasonable desires, it would be folly to jeopardize it by engaging in any fresh venture; that nothing which he could gain would render him happier, seeing that he possessed a home hallowed and illumined by a wife who was a compendium of what is finest in woman-kind, and enlivened with a boy whose prattle delighted him, and that his lines had finally fallen in places as pleasant as a garden of roses. He would probably have decided to take a surfeit of the good things at his command, if he had not been cast in a mould differing from that of his fellows.

Most men gladly and naturally succumb to a craving for repose and are perfectly indifferent to the reproach of rusting in slothful ease. Indeed, lotus-eating has an irresistible attraction for those who, after having toiled long and laboriously and endured much privation, can indulge in it to the full. Yet men of whom Ulysses is the type are as restless as they are daring under all conditions of mortal existence. So long as the hot blood of adventure surges through their veins they cannot pause and make an end. An irrepressible longing urges them to become the heroes of fresh exploits and win the

respect of new admirers. Standing forth from the commonplace mass of human kind, they are in direct and splendid contrast to the majority of those who consider themselves thrice blessed if permitted to plod through life without ever wincing under the spur of enthusiasm, or being sorely tempted to risk the loss of present comfort for a problematic and prospective gain.

Sheridan was no ordinary man. He appears to have entered the world to demonstrate by his example and conduct the utter and contemptible absurdity of proclaiming that all men can remain equal, or ought to rest satisfied with their lot. It is unhappily true that a dead level in humanity does exist; but it can only be found within the walls of an asylum for idiots. Sheridan's confidence in himself could not be repressed by penury, nor deadened by the predominance of those who were elevated above him by the accident of high birth or inherited wealth. When a boy he had resolved to rise to the top; he neither flinched nor failed in his upward course, and he lived to look down with serenity from the pinnacle of fame upon the applauding multitude below. It is inspiring to follow his steps; it is instructive to contemplate how he always despised the aid of unworthy means, and disdained employing any of the despicable tricks to which such men as his own Joseph Surface frequently resort for the attainment of their miserable ends. He was always dissatisfied and he was often imprudent; but there is an imprudence which is sublime as well as a discontent which is noble, and their manifestation in his person con-

stitutes one of his titles to esteem. Another is the fact that, in the protracted and keen struggle with competitors, he never lost his self-control and his good humour, or ceased to bear himself with the dignity and grace of a true gentleman. Had the goal of his ambition been reached in 1779, that year would have been the concluding one in his biography. But it merely marks the close of a chapter, instead of being the final date in the diversified story of his adventurous and dazzling career.

X.

DRURY LANE TO ST. STEPHEN'S.

SHERIDAN wrote at the beginning of *Hernan's Miscellany*: "It cannot be but people must be sick of these same rascally politics." After protracted and intimate experience, Disraeli spoke of them in similar and equally uncomplimentary terms.¹ Yet the fame of both men is closely identified with the politics which they disparaged. They aspired to rise through their practice of and with the aid of oratory to supreme rank among statesmen. Both were singularly averse to gaming, and this was the more remarkable in Sheridan's case because his dearest friends were persistent and daring gamblers, and the Pharaoh table was the delight in his day of all men and women of fashion. Yet he may have felt, as Disraeli must have done when he made Lord Roehampton say in *Endymion*, "there is no gambling like politics."

Both of them discussed politics when they were young and did so with great acuteness and effect. Disraeli wrote the *Letters of Runnymede*. Shortly after Sheridan left Harrow, he penned the follow-

¹ "Look at it as you will, ours is a beastly profession."—"Disraeli and his Day," by Sir W. Fraser, p. 380.

ing passage on "Why the Duke of Grafton should not lose his Head," and it is an excellent piece of sustained irony and sensible reflection: "The first argument of the Duke's adversaries is founded on the regard which ought to be paid to justice, and on the good effects which, they affirm, such an example would have of suppressing the ambition of any future Minister. But, if I can prove that his [Grace] might be made a much better example of by being suffered to live, I think I may without much vanity affirm that their whole argument will fall to the ground. By pursuing the methods which they propose, viz., chopping off his head, I allow the impression would be stronger at first, but we should consider how soon that wears off. If, indeed, his crimes were of such a nature as to entitle his head to a place on Temple Bar, I should allow some weight to their argument. But, in the present case, we should reflect how apt mankind are to relent after they have inflicted punishment; so that, perhaps, the same men who have detested the noble Lord, while alive and in prosperity, pointing him as a scare-crow to their children, might, after being witnesses to the miserable fate that had overtaken him, begin in their heart to pity him, and, from the fickleness so common to human nature, perhaps by way of compassion, acquit him of part of his crimes, insinuate that he was hardly dealt with, and thus, by the remembrance of their compassion on this occasion, be led to show more indulgence to any future offender in the same circumstances."¹

¹ An old Protestant Irishwoman, when hearing some one say that a politician ought to be hanged, expressed Sheridan's view in a

In later years, he contributed a paper to *The Englishman* on Lord George Germain in which he thus scourged one of George the Third's worst and most highly favoured Ministers: "It would be presuming too much on your attention, at present, to enter into an investigation of the measures and system of war which this Minister has pursued, —these shall certainly be the subject of a future paper. At present I shall only observe that, however mortifying it may be to reflect on the ignominy and disasters which this inauspicious character has brought on this country, yet there are consoling circumstances [conclusions?] to be drawn even from his ill-success. The calamities which may be laid to his account are certainly great; but, had the cause been otherwise, it may fairly be questioned whether the example of a degraded and reprobated officer, (preposterously elevated to one of the first stations of confidence and honour in the State), directing the military enterprizes of the country with unlooked-for prosperity, might not ultimately be the cause of more extensive evils than even those, great as they are, which we at present experience; whether from so fatal a precedent we might not be led to introduce characters under similar disqualifications into every department;—to appoint Atheists to the Mitre, *Jews* to the Exchequer,—to select a Treasury Bench from the *Justitia*, to place *Brown Dignam*¹ on

pithier form: "Ah no; lave him to the Lard, and the Lard will play the Divil with him."—Mr. Froude to Dr. Skelton in "Table-Talk of Shirley," p. 213.

¹ "One Dignam, a candidate for the borough of Hindon, and

the Woolsack, and Sir Hugh Palliser at the Head of the Admiralty."

Before becoming a candidate for Parliament, Sheridan had taken part in a great political demonstration, as a member of the Westminster Association which had been formed to further the cause of reform. He was chairman of a sub-committee which drew up the programme that was adopted, at a general meeting of 3,000 persons in Westminster Hall, over which Charles James Fox presided on the 2nd of February, 1780, the mover being Alderman Sawbridge, and the seconder being John Wilkes. Annual Parliaments and universal suffrage formed part of the scheme of reform which had the countenance of the Dukes of Richmond and Portland, of the Grenvilles and the Cavendishes.¹

The views which Sheridan took of politics had led him to attach himself to the Whig party. Lord John Townshend introduced him to Charles James

Parliament, had given information of a plot against the King's life, which he had invented, and it neither producing a place for him nor Lord Temple, he took to selling places to others, which all his merit could not obtain for himself—and so he is only in Newgate."—Horace Walpole to Mason, 13th March, 1777, "Letters," vol. vi., p. 420.

¹ George the Third never forgave the Duke of Richmond and Charles James Fox for their support of Parliamentary Reform. When Lord North was anxious to enlist them under his banner, the King wrote: "The Duke of Richmond and Mr. Fox have, more avowedly than any others of the Rockingham party, dipped themselves, for they have added, shortening the duration of Parliament; and the former, by a strange conceit of changing the whole mode and right of election, would materially alter the Constitution."—"Memorials of Charles James Fox," vol. i., p. 252.

Fox, with whom he soon became intimately acquainted and for whose talents he always entertained unbounded respect. He possessed the confidence and esteem of Burke, till Burke, over-mastered by passion and prejudice, thought fit to sever himself from all those to whom he had been long and closely attached. Windham, who was then a very zealous Whig, had been Sheridan's friend since their first meeting at Bath and, though afterwards differing in politics, they always remained on a footing of good fellowship. These men and other notable members of the Whig party agreed that the brilliant Sheridan ought to enter the House of Commons. They left him, however, to fight for his own hand, being ready to applaud his success when he had achieved it unaided.

At the time Sheridan strove to become a member of Parliament there were three ways of succeeding in the endeavour. The easiest was to be nominated by a patron to represent his pocket Borough. Before attaining his majority, Charles James Fox entered the House of Commons as member for Midhurst through his father's influence. Lord Verney seated Burke in Parliament as member for Wendover; the Marquess of Rockingham afterwards procured his election for Malton and, when the burgesses of Bristol refused to re-elect him after four years' service, he did so again. When the University of Cambridge rejected William Pitt on the ground of youth, Sir James Lowther caused him to be returned for Appleby. Lord John Russell proposed the great measure of Earl Grey's Government for Parliamentary

Reform when sitting in the House as the nominee of his father, the fourth Duke of Bedford, while it was owing to the third Marquess of Lansdowne having returned Macaulay for Calne that Macaulay was able to deliver in Parliament his luminous and impressive speeches in support of Reform. The astonishing Parliamentary career of Mr. Gladstone would have been much shorter if the Duke of Newcastle had not used his influence to seat him for Newark. The gate through which Fox and Burke, William Pitt and Lord John Russell, Macaulay and Mr. Gladstone first found admission to St. Stephen's, was not thrown open for Sheridan.

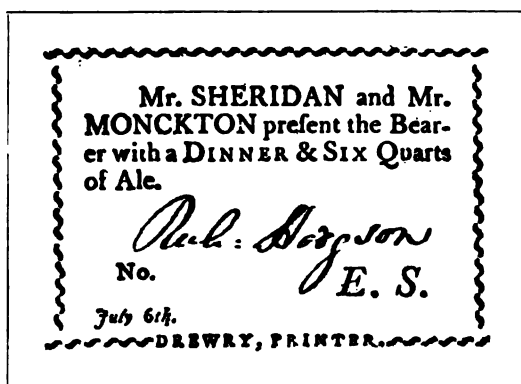
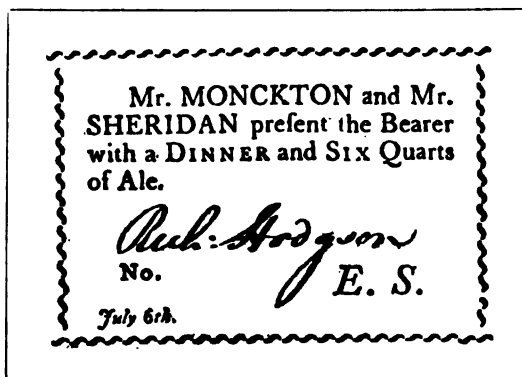
The second way was to buy a Borough and represent it either in person or by proxy. Hence it was that the Nabob of Arcot could depend upon seven members of Parliament voting in accordance with his wishes. But Sheridan was as unable to pay for a Borough as he was disinclined to sit for one in the capacity of a nominee and dependent. All through life he took pride in remaining his own master, whether directing a theatre or in Parliament.¹

¹ Though pocket Boroughs were abolished in 1832, some of the worst abuses connected with them still survive under different forms. A very rich, undistinguished, and ambitious man does not find the doors of either House of Parliament closed against him. Services to a party, if performed on a lavish scale, are not uncommonly rewarded with a peerage. The Borough or County which has been assiduously and adequately "nursed," will return the nurse to the House of Commons. The presentation of a park or library to the public, the building of a church, liberal donations to charities and local societies, are forms of persuasion against which no legislation has yet been directed. Existing practices may be

The third way was that which Sheridan chose, and it consisted in obtaining the suffrages of electors who were not under the thumb of a patron and who styled themselves, and expected to be styled by others, "free and independent."

Having sounded the electors of Honiton after the dissolution of Parliament in 1780 and found that he could not secure their support, Sheridan made an appeal to the electors of the Borough of Stafford, in concert with Mr. Monckton, who had represented it before. The Spencer family had great influence in Stafford and Lady Spencer gave him a letter to her husband's agent, while the Duchess of Devonshire contributed her aid in Sheridan's favour, which he thus acknowledged, after his election, in a letter now preserved in Devonshire House: "I profited by the permission allowed me to make use of your Grace's letter as my first and best introduction to Lord Spencer's interest in the town. I assure your Grace that I found good effects from it even out of the circle of influence which Lord Spencer's property and character so justly maintain in Stafford. It is no flattery to say that the Duchess of Devonshire's name commands an implicit admiration wherever it is mentioned, and I found some that had had oppor-

inferred from the *St. James's Gazette* for October 12, 1895: "Two recently elected members of Parliament have felt obliged to issue the following announcement: 'Messrs. — and — cannot subscribe to any more Football Clubs after this notice, having already subscribed to a very large number.' They have sent already 200 different cheques to Football Clubs in the Borough since their election."



FACSIMILES OF TICKETS ISSUED TO VOTERS AT ELECTIONS BY
SHERIDAN AND MONCKTON.

Vol. i. To face p. 354.

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TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

tunities of often seeing and of hearing more of your Grace who were so proud of the distinction as to require no other motive to support anyone who appeared honoured with your Grace's recommendation."

While many Burgesses were ready to vote for him, they insisted on being paid five pounds each, as was customary, though illegal. Those who could express public opinion by shouting, but might not vote, expected to be feasted while the polling lasted, and they received vouchers of which copies are given on another page. The accounts of the election in 1780 have not been preserved, but it is improbable that the outlay was smaller than in 1784, when the Burgesses received from Sheridan £1,302 in cash. As other payments had to be made annually, the drain upon his purse was continuous.

After being returned to represent Stafford in Parliament, he was naturally desirous of becoming a member of Brooks's Club, where the chiefs of the Whig party settled the affairs of the nation and lost their fortunes at play. It was more difficult, however, to become a member than to be beggared after admission. The Club was young in 1780. Though games of chance are prohibited within its walls now, it is still noteworthy among Clubs for having as members those who hold a good position in society and aristocratic views in politics.

Sheridan was thought to be an unwelcome candidate and many stories have been invented to give plausibility to this hypothesis. Owing to Sir Nathaniel Wraxall's imagination or blundering, one is current which a biographer of Sheridan considers,

"might fairly be accepted as true," and does so on the fantastic ground that it has been "repeated so often without contradiction."¹ This cogently exemplifies the sagacity of Dr. Johnson's remark, "that many things which are false are transmitted from book to book, and gain credit in the world."

Sir Nathaniel wrote that various members of the Club resolved to exclude Sheridan from it and that the Earl of Bessborough and George Selwyn were chief among them. They agreed that one or the other should be present at every ballot, "and as one black-ball sufficed to extinguish the hopes of a candidate, they repeatedly prevented his election." According to him, Sheridan's friends had recourse to artifice in order to checkmate them. An evening had been fixed for a ballot being taken again, and Bessborough and Selwyn were in the Club-house. A messenger delivered a note to Bessborough in which it was written that his house in Cavendish Square was on fire, and he at once left the Club. An oral message to the effect that Selwyn's adopted daughter was dangerously ill caused him to hurry off to Cleveland Row. They both returned after learning that they had been hoaxed, and they heard to their annoyance that Sheridan had been elected by a unanimous vote during their absence.²

Another, version clashing with this one, is given by the writer who quotes it, wherein the Prince of Wales plays a part as member of the Club. It is added :

¹ Mr. Fitzgerald's "Lives of the Sheridans," vol. i., p. 257.

² "Posthumous Memoirs of his Own Times," by Sir N. Wraxall, vol. iii., pp. 275, 276.

"That the device was of Sheridan's own conception we may be sure; yet, though we may smile at the joke, it does not seem an edifying or even a gentlemanly mode of gaining admittance to a private society."¹

Having narrated the legend, I shall state indisputable facts. Sheridan was returned for Stafford on the 12th of September, 1780. Mr. Fitzpatrick proposed him at Brooks's on the 12th of October in that year, and he was elected on the 2nd of November. The Earl of Bessborough did not become a member till 1782, nor was the Prince of Wales one till 1783.² Before censuring Sheridan for unedifying and ungentlemanly conduct, it might have been thought courteous, if not an imperative duty, to ascertain whether he was really guilty of it.

Sir Nathaniel Wraxall may be acquitted, perhaps, of any greater crime than confounding two events and giving the wrong names to many of the persons concerned. Mrs. Tickell wrote to her sister, Mrs. Sheridan, in 1785: "So I find the election has taken a happy turn at last and I am to congratulate myself with being the wife of a member of Brooks's . . . T[ickell] is delighted; the great point of his ambition is gained."³ It is possible that the ad-

¹ "Lives of the Sheridans," vol. i., pp. 258, 259.

² I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to my friend Mr. C. H. Roberts, an old member of Brooks's Club, for examining the candidates' book and having had the particulars extracted which are given in the text.

³ The letters from Mrs. Tickell were preserved by her sister and bequeathed to Mrs. Canning, from whom they have descended to her grand-daughter, the Honourable Louisa Canning, who has been so kind as to allow me to peruse and quote from them.

mission of Tickell, the brother-in-law of Sheridan, to Brooks's Club may have been "repeatedly prevented" by Lord Bessborough and George Selwyn. Those who knew Tickell intimately would have been justified in pronouncing him an unclubbable man.

Sheridan first spoke in the House of Commons eleven days after being elected a member of this Club. A petition had been presented by Mr. Benjamin Whitworth, a member for Stafford in the previous Parliament, alleging that the return of Mr. Monckton and Sheridan was due to bribery and corruption. Sheridan protested against the wording of the petition, which he styled frivolous and malicious. It is noted in the Parliamentary report that, while he spoke, the House was remarkably still and attentive. Mr. Rigby, a veteran and venal place-hunter, rose to answer, or rather to sneer at Sheridan, indulging as Sir Nathaniel Wraxall wrote, "in the coarse, contemptuous and insulting ridicule familiar to him." When Lord Sandwich sanctimoniously shocked his fellow Peers by reading aloud some indecent lines attributed to John Wilkes, it was justly remarked that the disgraceful exhibition resembled Satan reproving Sin. As a candidate for Stafford, little if anything had been done by Sheridan for which the doubtful sanction of usage could not be pleaded. Yet, even if he had been an open and flagrant law-breaker, Rigby was not the man to reprove him and to bemoan, in hypocritical accents, the affliction of the Burgesses of Stafford under the odium of having been bribed. After Charles James Fox had sup-

ported Sheridan's lively and effective protest, the Speaker ruled that there was no question before the House.¹

Sheridan's first speech was a complete success.² The ordeal through which he triumphantly passed had daunted many of his contemporaries. The House of Commons of which he was a member repre-

¹ *The Parliamentary History*, vol. xxi., pp. 871, 872.

² Need I add that Moore propagated the fiction of Sheridan's first speech in the House of Commons being a failure? He wrote in the "Memoirs" of Sheridan (vol. i., p. 348) that "Woodfall used to relate" a statement to that effect. In his *Diary* he made this entry on the 8th of January, 1819: "Mr. Joy mentioned that Woodfall (I suppose of *The Chronicle*) told him that he was in the House the first night that Sheridan spoke; and that after the speech, Sheridan came up to the gallery and asked him with much anxiety what he thought of his success. Woodfall answered, "I think this is not your line; no, Sheridan; you had much better stick to those pursuits you are so much more fitted for," upon which Sheridan, leaning his forehead upon his hand for a few seconds, exclaimed, "It is in me and, by God, it shall come out." This tale was told to Moore by a Mr. Joy, who said that he had it from Woodfall, and this Woodfall is supposed by Moore to have been the conductor of *The Morning Chronicle*. The story is a pendant to the untrue one that Sheridan's mother told Mr. Samuel Whyte her boy was "an impenetrable dunce." Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, a political opponent and no friendly critic of Sheridan, heard his maiden speech, and has given no hint of its having fallen flat or failed to please. On the contrary, he confirms the record in *The Parliamentary History*, which William Woodfall may have written, that "Sheridan was heard with particular attention, the House being very uncommonly still while he was speaking." This is never the attitude of the House towards a speaker who is a nincompoop. Sir Nathaniel's own words are: "Even while pronouncing the few sentences which he uttered, the fame of the author of *The Duenna*, *The School for Scandal*, and *The Critic* was already so well established as to procure him the greatest attention." Wraxall's "Historical Memoirs," vol. ii., p. 51.

sented the collective ignorance of the nation with as great fidelity as that House does at present, while leavened then, as it has happily been from its foundation till now, with the superlative ability and attainments, the supreme tact and true statesmanship of a few. In one respect it differed for the better in Sheridan's time from its existing condition and tendency. His fellow-members had a healthy and unconcealed intolerance of bores. They set greater store on legislation than on babble, and exacted a high standard of oratory in those who addressed them, accounting it indispensable, moreover, that they should be well-educated and conduct themselves as gentlemen. Fluent and foolish talk they abhorred, preferring practical politics even to the gorgeous declamation of Burke. Yet a great orator could enchain their attention, as he can do that of their successors, when combining graces of speech with the conduct of legislation, carefully avoiding all irritating display of arrogance and dictation, and insinuating his opinions into minds which are susceptible and respond to the charms of finished and pointed rhetoric. Mastery over the House of Commons has never been exercised by any but those who are profoundly versed in the problems of Government, who have been gifted by Nature with the art of leading and ruling their fellows, and who possess consummate aptitude and extraordinary resource in debate. The men in whom the House of Commons places implicit trust and delights to honour are those of whom the nation has ample reason to feel proud.

Yet many really great men, whose reputation has

been acquired without the walls of St. Stephen's, have been miserable failures within them. They have either miscalculated their powers, or else they have lacked the skill to divert them into a new channel. An accomplished legislator requires training which cannot be communicated outside the arena of Parliamentary discussion, any more than swimming can be learned upon dry land. The possessors of the finest intellects have not always been the best Parliament men. Addison was a silent member, even after he had risen to be Secretary of State, and his prudence averted possible insult and personal disappointment. Steele, being less judicious, was abashed and had to resume his seat owing to shouts of "*Tatler, Tatler,*" and he had the mortification to hear Squire Western and his friends from the country, who never read books and could scarcely sign their names, gleefully remark to each other: "It is not so easy a thing to speak in the House; he fancies he can do so because he can scribble."

Dr. Johnson was urged by foolish advisers to enter Parliament; it was fortunate that he never did so, because his fate would have been as humiliating as Steele's. The House never submits to being lectured, while Johnson could not have endured contradiction, and if he had been a member, a combat must have ensued in which he would inevitably have been worsted. Though Erskine could electrify a jury and his forensic speeches have few equals, yet inferior orators have exercised greater influence over the House of Commons. Flood came from Ireland with the reputation of a modern Demosthenes, yet he failed

to gain the ear of the House. Grattan, on the other hand, achieved victories in debate in the Parliament of the United Kingdom, worthy of being numbered among those which had made him famous in the Parliament of his native land. O'Connell could not sway his fellows in Parliament as he did his hearers who paid "the Rent." Francis Jeffrey, who combined the gifts and powers of a keen critic and a great advocate, was heard with scant courtesy when he opened his mouth in the House of Commons. Sir James Mackintosh's spoken essays, though finished in diction, fell flat. Macaulay's rhetoric was as magnificent in speech as in writing, yet he never rose to be a splendid Parliamentary debater. The members of the House of Commons heard with impatience the carefully prepared and badly delivered orations of Bulwer Lytton, and his fame would have been evanescent if it had rested upon them alone. George Grote and John Stuart Mill were great thinkers and Parliamentary failures. Disraeli entered Parliament buoyed up with hope of immediately making his mark. In his maiden speech he vainly implored for the attentive hearing which was readily accorded to Sheridan, and he sat down amid the unmannerly jeers of those who lived to applaud, fear and follow him. Not only did Sheridan justify in the House of Commons the brilliant reputation with which he entered it, but he also achieved there the greatest feat as an orator which is recorded in the varied annals of the five hundred years of its existence.

The Parliament which held its first session in 1780 did not abound in great debaters. About

eighteen months before it met, the death of Chatham had deprived the House of Lords of the most impressive orator and the grandest figure among the statesmen of that day. Few members of either House in 1780 had a genius for statesmanship. The name of the Duke of Richmond is remembered by the student of history as that of a nobleman who was an early and ardent advocate of universal suffrage and who, till terror-stricken by the first Revolution in France, was what would be termed at present an advanced Radical in politics. The Earl of Shelburne might now be styled a philosophical Liberal ; he was far more enlightened than most of his contemporaries, and he would have been a great leader of men if he had possessed the gift of persuading his fellows to place confidence in his judgment. He was at once extremely clever and unpopular. Though the Marquess of Rockingham was his inferior in originality and intellect, yet he was regarded with greater respect because he was believed to be entirely trustworthy.

Both Shelburne and Rockingham displayed as much generous feeling as tact in the countenance which they afforded to men who had no other superiority than their talents. Lord Shelburne was the friend of Jeremy Bentham ; Lord Rockingham was the friend of Edmund Burke, and in each case the association was highly creditable and advantageous. Bentham helped to keep green and sweet the memory of the Earl of Shelburne. When the Marquess of Rockingham was suddenly and prematurely cut off, Burke conferred upon him

an immortality which neither rank nor fortune could have given by penning an epitaph in which he is styled "A man worthy to be held in esteem because he did not live for himself. . . . He far exceeded all other statesmen in the art of drawing together, without the seduction of self-interest, the concurrence and co-operation of various abilities and dispositions of men, whom he assimilated to his character and associated with his labours." The Duke of Grafton was a friend and colleague of Rockingham and a man of far higher capacity. He was honoured with the invective of Junius. It was his misfortune to be cursed with indolence and to shrink from the labour of doing justice to himself. Lord Thurlow was less noteworthy as a statesman, than as a man of great ability and no scruples ; he was long an occupant of the Woolsack, and Fox truly said of him that "no man was so wise as Thurlow looked."

In the House of Commons, great orators and statesmen were as rare as in the other branch of the Legislature. Lord North, the Prime Minister, was a fluent and pleasing speaker, who displayed invincible good-humour when subjected to ferocious attack, who said few things that were wise and did none that were very disgraceful. His greatest fault was to subordinate his judgment to the prejudices of the King, and his misfortune consisted in not having the strength of mind to decline the responsibility of being the instrument for carrying out a policy towards the American Colonies of which he disapproved and which he rightly feared would end in disaster. None of his lieutenants, except Wedderburn, was an

orator who rose high above mediocrity, and it was the sad fate of Wedderburn to have exercised his fatal eloquence to incense Franklin and convert him into an implacable enemy of Great Britain. John Wilkes sat on the Opposition side ; he had achieved notoriety without proving himself to be an orator. Isaac Barré had attained high rank as a master of sarcasm. Charles James Fox was not only the leader of the Opposition, but he was also the most popular member of the House, while he had no superior amid the stress and strain of debate. In all that constitutes an orator Edmund Burke may be supposed to have had no rival by those who now read the speeches which have been preserved in the very words that were used during their delivery. Yet these philosophic orations exasperated instead of enchanting their hearers. Members flocked to dinner when he rose, and they left him declaiming to empty benches. If his temper had been more suave and his delivery more attractive, he might have moulded the minds of his hearers as he pleased. His pen was infinitely more potent than his tongue, and his speeches live on account of their literary finish and comprehensive wisdom. Edward Gibbon, one of his fellow-members, who wrote quite as forcibly and has immortalized his name, 'always contented himself with giving a silent vote on a division.'¹

¹ James Macpherson was one of the 113 new members in the Parliament of 1780 and his voice was never raised in it. The controversy concerning his "Poems of Ossian" had enriched him, and he was able to live luxuriously in England through having been attacked and denounced as a Scotsman and an impostor.

William Pitt was the only new member in the Parliament of 1780 who performed a feat which is not less memorable in Parliamentary annals than that of which Sheridan is the hero. He dissolved, as Prime Minister, the Parliament which he entered at the age of twenty-two. Sheridan's reputation had preceded him ; the commanding memory of Chatham made the House of Commons regard with curious yet kindly eyes the first appearance of his second son. Sheridan had many prejudices to conquer. William Pitt had lofty expectations to fulfil. The prejudices against Sheridan dissolved in his genial presence. The most exacting critic was compelled to avow the supremacy of William Pitt after his maiden speech had been delivered. Old members fancied that his father was again among them in the fulness of his power, when the son supported the second reading of Burke's elaborate Bill for the Regulation of the Civil List Establishments. Sheridan spoke also and reprehended Mr. Courtenay in telling and masterly terms for ridiculing the conduct and impugning the motives of the Opposition and failing to understand the gravity of the measure itself, while he warmly appealed to the adherents of the Ministry to act with dignity, even if they could not debate with decency. He ended his speech by assuring Mr. Courtenay, "that the most serious part of his argument appeared to him to be the most ludicrous." In like manner, he had remarked that Cumberland's tragedy made him laugh heartily. Mr. Courtenay felt the sting of the retort and was as mortified as Cumberland ; but, when he had the bad taste to

reply, "that the Honourable Gentleman was an enemy to mirth and wit in any house but his own," the Speaker immediately called him to order.¹

William Pitt and Sheridan voted together in the minority when a division was taken. They seldom did so again. During a quarter of a century afterwards they were bitter antagonists and foremost among orators. Both were incomparable debaters. Tierney told Moore that Pitt had assured him he thought Sheridan "a far greater man than Mr. Fox."² William Pitt and Fox, Burke and Sheridan are the four intellectual athletes who chiefly contributed to render the House of Commons, between 1780 and 1806, an unmatched arena for oratorical contests and triumphs.

¹ *The Parliamentary History*, vol. xxi., pp. 1290, 1291. Moore quotes from this speech at p. 350 of the first volume of his "Memoirs" of Sheridan, while at p. 358 of that volume he writes: "Among the subjects upon which Sheridan appears to have been rather unaccountably silent, was the renewal of Mr. Burke's Bill for the Regulation of the Civil List." What is really unaccountable is that Moore should have blundered by denying on p. 358 what he had truthfully affirmed on p. 350.

² Moore's *Diary*, vol. ii., p. 226.

XI.

IN POLITICAL HARNESS.

SHERIDAN'S connexion with Drury Lane Theatre was a triumph and trial of his life. He depended upon the theatre for his daily bread, when his heart was in Parliament. He had deliberately devoted himself to the service of the public and subjected himself to the yoke of a task-master who is always over-exacting, who is generally ungrateful and whose service is perfect drudgery. The humble villager who might have swayed the rod of empire, often moaned, perhaps, about the rigour of his lot, yet he would have been little the happier if he had risen to be Prime Minister. Prince Bismarck ruefully avowed that, during his long tenure of high office, he had known but twenty-four hours of happiness.

Had Sheridan enjoyed "the glorious privilege," as Burns aptly phrases it, of being independent in money matters, his career would have been less agitated and exhausting. Junius rightly advised Henry Sampson Woodfall to let all his views in life be directed "to a solid, however moderate independence. Without it no man can be happy, nor even

honest.”¹ If his conscience had been elastic and his services purchaseable, he would easily have obtained an ample income out of the public purse after making his mark in the House of Commons ; but he earned the right to boast in his old age that he had preserved his political virtue untarnished. He might then have added, with perfect justice, that he had never faltered in allegiance to the progressive and enlightened branch of the Whig party which, in his day, was led by Charles James Fox and was afterwards directed and adorned by Earl Grey, Macaulay and Lord John Russell.

The Whiggism of Sheridan, and of Fox, its great high-priest, would have been denounced in 1831 as wild Radicalism and would be Liberalism of an advanced type at the present day. Fox told the House of Commons in 1783, when Secretary for Foreign Affairs and its leader, that in his opinion “mankind were made for themselves, not for others, and that it was the best government where the people had the greatest share of it.” A thoroughgoing Whig, like the Duke of Richmond, had advocated universal suffrage.

William Pitt in his earlier years and Fox, after he became leader of the Whigs, voted for the equal representation of the people in Parliament. Sheridan was of the same mind ; but he preferred triennial Parliaments in opposition to annual ones, which were favoured by some statesmen of his day as well as by many demagogues. Lord Shelburne, who had an open mind for reform, was more inclined than

¹ “Junius,” edition 1812, vol. i., p. 253.

others who did not seriously disagree with his politics to regard the Prime Minister as the official exponent of the Sovereign's personal sentiments and a mere instrument for giving effect to his will. He held that the business of Parliament consisted, to use a commercial phrase, in endorsing the King's commands. It is probable that Shelburne considered himself capable, as Premier, of humouring George the Third; getting his own way in important matters by making concessions in minor ones and circumventing, by astute management, the mischievous influence of those who posed as the King's friends.¹ Dunning was one of Shelburne's ablest followers and he regarded the insidious and increasing power of the Crown with greater dismay and jealousy than his chief; his famous motion to which the House assented was supported by Fox and Sheridan in the hope that it would not remain a dead letter after having been sanctioned by the House of Commons.

Burke undertook the hopeless task of lessening the domination of the Sovereign over the representatives of the nation and Sheridan battled magnificently by his side. Indeed, Burke, Fox, and Sheridan fought the good fight together during the dark and evil days when the Opposition in Parliament could do little more than vainly protest against the headstrong and fatal policy which the Ministry

¹ Dr. Johnson said to Boswell, in reply to the inquiry, "How did Shelburne get into favour with the King?" "Because, sir, I suppose he promised the King to do whatever the King pleased." —"Life of Johnson," G. B. Hill's edition, vol. iv., p. 174.

pursued at the instigation and with the cordial approval of the King, a policy which was alike irrational and wicked, which made Britons in America the declared enemies of Britons at home and which, being as devoid of success as of sense, finally rent the Empire in twain.

Those who expected that Sheridan would play in Parliament the part of Charles Surface on the stage, were surprised to observe that he was unflagging in his attendance, that he was thoroughly practical in his methods, that he never wearied the House with irrelevant speeches and that his wit, instead of being a worthless rhetorical firework, was made subservient to the inculcation of shrewd common sense. When most amusing, he was as much in earnest and as wise in suggestion and comment as Sydney Smith was in other places and after days.

The fourth speech which Sheridan delivered in Parliament stamped him as a statesman. It related to the Gordon riots, when a ravening mob, maddened with bigotry and gin, carried havoc through the cities of London and Westminster and was not cowed and dispersed till vigorously opposed by the army at the bidding of the King.

When Sheridan called upon the House of Commons on the 5th of March, 1781, to condemn the state of the Police in Westminster, he made out a strong case against the magistrates of that City. Yet their conduct admitted of palliation. They were afraid to invoke the aid of the military lest they should be placed in the dock, as had happened to a Surrey magistrate who, after reading the Riot Act

twice, ordered the soldiers to fire upon the tumultuous mob which filled St. George's Fields in 1768. In the City of London the Lord Mayor displayed incompetence, for which he was justly censured, when dealing with the pious patriots who endeavoured to sack the Bank of England, but Alderman Wilkes, on whose behalf the rioters of 1768 had risked their lives, was conspicuous in leading the attack upon the rioters of 1780. A dread existed in Sheridan's day lest a standing army should be employed to crush the friends of liberty, and his speech in Parliament contained an honest admission that the law of the land was endangered by the lawlessness of the sword.

The report of this speech is very meagre. That it was effective is clear not only because Fox, the seconder, lauded its "elegance and energy," but because Lord North, the Prime Minister, while declining to accept Sheridan's motion, admitted "the particular ability" with which it had been urged upon the House by its introducer. I have found some memoranda in his handwriting which are fuller than the published report of the speech he delivered, and I shall quote a few sentences which will serve to show what he actually thought and doubtless expressed: "I ask how came such men in the Commission [of the Peace]? How comes the preservation of the peace of the County to be entrusted to such hands by its Lord Lieutenant? But if I am informed again that this is not to be imputed as blame to the Lord Lieutenant, or because that the office of a magistrate in Middlesex and West-

minster is so troublesome, arduous and so discreditable that few gentlemen of property and character will undertake it, then I ask why this defective principle has never been attempted to be removed, why have the officers of the Crown, the Ministry or Parliament never been applied to to provide a remedy for the peculiar situation of the magistracy of this county? Is it a new evil? No. It is a grievance which has long been felt and complained of. The name of a Middlesex Justice has long been a term of proverbial reproach. But setting aside every shadow of blame to be inferred from all this, I would ask but one question more. Why have no measures been taken *since the riots* to put the magistracy and police on a better footing, or has a single man who deserted his duty on that occasion been since superseded in the Commission? If nothing of this [sort] has been done [and if] the police and magistracy of this city remain in the same miserable state at this day, is not the conduct of those from whom a reformation in this matter ought to have come liable to the construction that they permit from design and deliberation the civil authority to remain in the same state of proved imbecility and convicted depravity in order that the protection of the bayonet may continue in repute, and a perpetual pretence exist for the military acting without waiting for the authority of that civil power which had been tried and found unworthy to be applied to? I do not pretend to say that these are the motives of Ministers, but that their conduct is liable to the construction. . . . Orderly sergeants

were waiting in Westminster Hall at the doors of [the Courts] in their uniforms during the whole of the trial [of Lord George Gordon] and we all know the state of preparation the military were in. While I am not blaming these precautions, for certainly there was no reason to suppose that if tumults had arisen the magistracy of Westminster, left in the state it was in on the 6th of June, would have acted in any different manner, and if the order to the military to act without the civil power is in itself, as has been contended by the highest law authorities, it cannot be said that it is necessary to wait till the city was in flames again before it could be repeated. Now, Sir, it appears to me that there are two plausible excuses for neglect in re-establishing the civil authority, either for those whose particular duty I conceive it to have been or, if I may venture to say so, for Parliament itself, and the first is a real belief that the tumults and outrages in June were not the phrenzy of a mischievous rabble encouraged at first by a generous connivance and afterwards by a general panic, not a mob of rioters and common plunderers presuming and uniting on the apparent extinction of all civil authority, but that the whole was the effect of deep and desperate conspiracy . . . in short, a conspiracy such as was never heard of before in any country, Christian or pagan. . . . The civil power must decrease with the military interference and in a little time we shall have soldiers as watchmen, sentinels at the corner of every street. Will any man who reads the Riot Act, say the laws of England have not precision enough against

mobs and tumults without constructive treason? Why did any idea prevail [among the mob] there was no law because there was no resistance?"¹

Sheridan's earliest speeches in Parliament were listened to as attentively as any delivered in later years, because he possessed the making of a statesman as well as the divine gift of oratory. He was not more energetic and opportune in resisting the encroachment of the military upon the civil power than wise and ardent in opposing all incentives to gaming which, under the form of lotteries, were thought in his day to be unobjectionable. He condemned them in 1781 because they "not only promoted the spirit of gambling among the lower orders of society, but by suspending all industrious pursuits, tended to introduce every kind of depravity." In thus speaking he was in earnest. Others who squandered their money at the gaming-table were greatly concerned lest "the lower orders of society" should act with the like folly; but Sheridan was never a gamester, and there was no hypocrisy in his aims as a legislator. He always paid particular attention to financial subjects and he was as shrewd a critic of Lord North's hap-hazard financial policy, soon after he had become a member of Parliament, as he was of William Pitt's skilfully devised schemes when he had become an old Parliamentary hand.

When Sheridan first addressed the House of Commons he was hectored but not abashed by

¹ It may interest some persons to compare these sentences which he probably spoke with what the reporter put into his mouth.—"Speeches," vol. i., p. 7.

Rigby. Twelve months afterwards he amused the House by rallying Rigby for the contempt with which he had spoken of Parliamentary electors, and by ridiculing Lord George Germain for the disparaging strain in which he spoke of the American Colonies. Lord George preserved a discreet silence ; while Rigby laboured to explain away remarks which he feared would discredit and injure him in the country. On the 8th of March, 1782, Sheridan finally revenged himself upon Rigby, who had tried to silence him when he was a new and inexperienced member.

The civil war in America was then nearing the discreditable close for which incompetent British Ministers and as incompetent British generals had prepared the way. Lord John Cavendish moved a vote of censure upon Lord North's Administration, and he was supported by Sir Fletcher Norton, who had been Speaker in two Parliaments and who now attacked Rigby, the Paymaster of the Forces. Rigby was nettled but not intimidated, and he treated the criticism and threats of the Opposition with a mixture of levity and insolence. When commenting upon his speech, Sheridan said that "he meant to speak to the purpose, but he wished not to be judged by the test laid down by the Right Honourable gentleman [Mr. Rigby], for he meant to give no offence in what he should say, though it was true the rule had been proposed from high authority ; for undoubtedly, if the degree of offence which speeches gave was to be considered as the criterion of eloquence, the Right Honourable gentleman must be looked up to as the Demosthenes of that as-

sembly." These words were neither complimentary nor relished by Rigby ; but the light raillery which followed was admired by the House and still more disliked by him :—" The Right Honourable gentleman had long declared that he thought the American war ought to be abandoned, but he had uniformly given his vote for its continuance. He did not mean, however, to insinuate any motive for such conduct ; he believed the Right Honourable gentleman to have been sincere ; he believed that as a member of Parliament, as a Privy Councillor, as a private gentleman, he had always detested the American war as much as any man, but he had never been able to persuade the Paymaster that it was a bad war, and, unfortunately, in whatever character he spoke, it was the Paymaster who always voted in that House."¹

In the course of this speech, Sheridan both defined his own position and defended the critics of the Government. He challenged Lord North to accept the defence which Mr. Adam had made of his conduct and asked whether all the miscarriages during the contest were really chargeable upon the Opposition, " who had never prevented his having a man or a guinea that he had demanded ?" He concluded with a eulogy on the Opposition of which he was a member, a eulogy which, he said, he would not have presumed to express, " if it were not in his power to assert that he gave his vote as independently as any man in that House ; that no man should ever dictate to him ; that he gave it as he did from a sincere conviction that *that* party had ability to retrieve the

¹ Parliamentary History, vol. xxi., p. 1146.

affairs of this country, as far as they could now be retrieved, and that they were men who had an honest leaning to the constitution and liberties of this country, both of which he thought actually assailed under the present system." It is unfortunate that the accepted rules of the political game prevented Lord North from speaking out and saying, as he probably thought in the depths of his heart, that he entirely concurred with Sheridan and that he held the office of Premier, not to give effect to his own opinions, but as the instrument of the policy of George the Third. The debate was memorable for the declaration which William Pitt made in the course of it, after expressing views identical with those of Sheridan, to the effect that "he would never accept a subordinate situation in a new Administration."¹ The result of the division, in which William Pitt acted as a teller, and the Ministerial majority fell to ten, may have been due in part to the emphatic and pointed phrase with which Pitt ended his remarkable speech: "the simple question was, 'will you change your Ministers and keep the Empire?' or 'keep your Ministers and lose the Kingdom?'" Twelve days later, the long and baleful Administration over which Lord North presided and of which the King pulled the strings ceased to exist, to the gratification of all patriots and to the great relief of Lord North himself.

¹ Pitt regretted, and would have withdrawn the words, if Admiral Keppel had not said to him, "Parliamentary explanations are best avoided."—Rockingham's "Memoirs," vol. ii., pp. 423, 424. Pitt did not then deserve Wellington's compliment of always "knowing what he was going to say."—"Conversations," by Earl Stanhope, p. 164.

When Parliament reassembled on the 8th of April, 1782, the Marquess of Rockingham was Prime Minister, while Shelburne and Fox were the two Secretaries of State. The office of Vice-Treasurer for Ireland, with a salary of £5,000, which his father had held was proffered to William Pitt, but he would not accept it,¹ his heart being set on an office entitling him to a seat in the Cabinet. Shelburne thought that Rockingham had agreed to conciliate William Pitt by acceding to his demands and wrote to Lady Chatham under that supposition, receiving in reply an expression of "her private happiness at the high honour done to her son William."² Many persons have wondered since then why Burke was not made a Cabinet Minister, but was relegated to the secondary and lucrative position of Paymaster-General of the Forces. The Marquess of Rockingham knew very little of William Pitt, and he was intimately acquainted with Edmund Burke, who had acted as private secretary to him when Premier in 1765. If better acquainted with Pitt, he might gladly have offered him any office which he aspired to fill, yet he could not further endanger the harmony of the Cabinet, in which a disturbing element was present in the person of Shelburne, by admitting Burke also with whom it was difficult to reason and almost impossible to work when his passions were aroused and his prejudices uncurbed. The wise maxims which gild Burke's speeches and writings did not always govern his

¹ Lord Stanhope's "Life of William Pitt," vol. i., p. 72.

² Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice's "Life of Shelburne," vol. iii., p. 136.

conduct in office. By condoning the malversations of Powell and Bembridge, after being appointed Paymaster for the second time, he strained the quality of mercy to the detriment of the nation.

Burke's services to the Whig party during the sixteen years he sat in Parliament fully merited the recognition which they received; that Sheridan should have been placed in the responsible and important office of Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, after having sat but two years in the House of Commons, is a proof that he had rapidly and strongly made his mark there. The second son of the Earl of Chatham, whose parliamentary experience was of the same length and who not then displayed greater ability, proudly intimated that no subordinate post would satisfy his ambition. A like declaration from the lips of the second son of plain Thomas Sheridan would have been greeted with shouts of laughter. The minor wits of the day thought it a joke that Sheridan should have been appointed to any office, and they deemed it funny to allege that a notice was affixed to the door of his official room couched in these terms: "No application to be received here on Sundays, nor any business done during the remainder of the week." A joke whether good or bad is sometimes treated with undue earnestness in England as well as in Scotland, and narrators of Sheridan's life have obtusely and solemnly treated this mediocre one as an authentic statement of fact.¹

¹ Sheridan's conduct in Parliament appears to have given satisfaction to American patriots. Moore refers somewhat obscurely to an anecdote—vol. i., p. 361—concerning Sheridan and the American

A politician's friends are always effusive in their congratulations upon his attaining a position in the State to which patronage is attached. They wish to show they have not forgotten him and they imply a hope that he will not forget them. Sheridan's elder brother Charles Francis had displayed affection for him by borrowing money ; he cordially congratulated him upon being now able, as a member of the Rockingham Administration, to obtain for him a post in the Government service, which he thought would suit him far better than struggling at the Irish Bar. Charles Francis, through his brother's influence, was appointed Secretary at War in Ireland, and he rivalled the Vicar of Bray in the tenacity with which he clung to it, despite Ministerial changes, till a claim for a pension was established and admitted. The letter which Charles Francis wrote to his brother has been printed by Moore¹ and does not merit reproduction ; a characteristic passage is given in a note ; that from Sheridan to him, Moore did

Government, while in his *Diary* he gives the following particulars of the reference : "A friend told Miss Edgeworth that Mrs. Lefanu [Sheridan's elder sister] had seen a letter to Sheridan from one of the persons high in the American Government, towards the latter end of the war, expressing great admiration of his talents and political opinions, and telling him that £20,000 were deposited with a certain banker, ready for him to draw, as a mark of their value for his services in the cause of liberty. She had also seen S.'s answer, in which, with many gratified acknowledgments of their high opinion, he begged leave to decline the gift communicated under such circumstances."—Moore's *Diary*, vol. i., pp. 212, 213.

¹ In a long letter dated the 27th of March, 1782, Charles Francis says : "I return you many thanks for Fox's letter. I

not see. I now print it chiefly because of the light which it throws upon Sheridan's own feelings and desires at the time: the date is April 2nd, 1782:—"Though I have time only to send you a very few lines to-night, I will not omit to convince you how very much a man of business I have become, by acknowledging the receipt of a letter from you this day.

"I take it for granted that you know from our newspapers that it is the *Under-Secretary of State* who has become thus punctual. Whether you may think I have chosen prudently or not I can't tell,¹ but it is the situation of all others that I have thought the rightest for me to take. I wanted to force myself into business, punctuality and information; and when I resolved to be in this way I resolved also to sacrifice every other object. The want of attention or knowledge of business shall not positively be an objection to me in any-

mean for your good intentions to make him write one—for as your good intentions always satisfy your conscience, and that you seem to think the carrying them into execution to be a mere trifling ceremony, as well omitted as not, your friends must always take the *will* for the *deed*. I will forgive you, however, on condition that you will for once in your life consider that though the *will* alone may perfectly satisfy yourself, your friends would be a little more gratified if they were sometimes to see it accompanied by the deed—and let me be the first upon whom you try the experiment." In the last paragraph he writes, "I shall not be able to send you the remaining £50 till October."—Moore's "Memoirs" of Sheridan, vol. i., pp. 370, 373.

¹ It may be unnecessary to note, what few readers will overlook, that these words imply that Sheridan had been consulted as to the office he desired to have and that he did not simply accept what was offered.

thing I aim at hereafter—as you shall see and hear—and so also will you hear of Mr. Secretary Fox.

‘ But to the point you wish to know so much. Ld. Carlisle is certainly to come home immediately and the Duke of Portland to go over to you. My very particular friend, [Colonel Fitzpatrick] next to Fox himself will be his Secretary. Under these circumstances I need not add that man Foine is not likely to be forgotten—but I should wish to know from you immediately somewhat that you wish to push for or the kind of line ;—as for the letter to Ld. Carlisle no one was to blame and I not in the least, for the matter was that when Fox came to write, the awkwardness of it struck him more forcibly than when he promised—and the event shews—but if they will do a good thing at parting, it will do no harm. You will have a new commander-in-chief—a friend of mine too [Lt. General Burgoyne]—but though these will be no secrets in a few days, you will see that they had better not be published by you.

“ I wish you would have (if you are intimate enough) a full and friendly talk with Mr. Grattan—and tell me what the effect would be of repealing the Declaratory Law here, suppos[ing it] moved by the new Secretary, I mean the Irish one? and whether it would not be judged right on both sides, afterwards to settle in some kind of convention a sort of union of commercial regulation, and a security of future agreement and co-operation in great matters by some wider bond of union than merely the having one first Magistrate in common? You know my sentiments and all I mean about it.

I have pressed extremely this appeal, but it is wonderful how little any people here have thought or enquired about Ireland—it seems to me now the precise time for it.

“God bless you, dear Charles, and if you have any good in you write me a long letter, and if you can get the direct and cordial sentiments and views of the real acting people on your side—I don't mean on the Government side—but of such men as Grattan and Lord Charlemont, it may be of service both to you and the cause to furnish me with them, and I should think that under the new system here they would have no repugnance to speak out, and really say what they think had best be done here.”

The first and chief concern of the second Rockingham Administration was the conclusion of peace between Great Britain and the Colonies in America which had declared and, with the help of France, had maintained their independence. Both the manner of carrying on negotiations and the choice of the persons to act and be addressed distracted the Administration. Fox acted as if the business were his, while Shelburne did so also on the plea that he was entitled to conduct it. Thomas Grenville was despatched to Paris by Fox with instructions to treat with Count de Vergennes, while Shelburne empowered Richard Oswald to enter into negotiations with Franklin. The two Secretaries of State differed as greatly in their views as in their procedure. Immediate recognition of the Independence of the Thirteen United States had been resolved upon by Fox, while Shelburne desired to

make this recognition contingent on the terms of peace being satisfactory and he even hoped, by some jugglery, to avert the entire separation of the Colonies from the Motherland. As the story of the negotiations has been lucidly and faithfully told by Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice in the "Life" of his ancestor Lord Shelburne, I confine myself now to describing the part which Sheridan played in it and to printing letters which Moore never saw.

On the 21st of May, 1782, Sheridan wrote officially from St. James's to Thomas Grenville, at Paris: "You are certainly one of the best negotiators that ever negotiated; and so says the King, your royal master, who is going to send you the fine silver box which you receive with this and which, with great envy, I learn is your property; and which, if the serious modesty of your previous despatch could have been seriously contrived, you would not have been entitled to. Though I have not written before, have not my punctuality and remembrance appeared conspicuous in the newspapers you receive? These tell you all the private news, and all that is important of public you will have heard before you receive this; so this must be a very short letter, and indeed the messenger is almost going; and Charles [Fox] has been writing to you, which is another reason for my saying very little.

"Mr. Oswald talks very sanguinely about Franklin, and says he is more open to you than he has been to anyone; but he is a Scotsman, and belonging to Lord Shelburne. If the business of an

American treaty seemed likely to prosper in your hands, I should not think it improbable that Lord Shelburne would try to thwart it. Oswald has not yet seen Lord Shelburne; and by his cajoling manner to *our Secretary* and eagerness to come to him, I do not feel much prejudiced in his favour; but probably I judge wrongly whenever the other Secretary is concerned, for I grow suspicious of him in every respect, the more I see of every transaction of his.

"I am just told that the messenger is ready, so more in my next. There is no particular news. The Dutch are got back to the Texel. Lord Howe still off there, but nothing likely to come of it. Sir G. Rodney, notwithstanding his victory, is to be recalled and Pigott is sailed. This I think very magnanimous in the Ministers or very impolitic; events must justify, but it is putting themselves too much in their power.

"We had a good illumination for this news. You see how we go on in Parliament by the papers; we were bullied outrageously about our poor Parliamentary Reform; but it will do at last, in spite of you all."

A fortnight before Sheridan wrote the foregoing letter, William Pitt had moved for a Committee which should be commissioned to inquire into the state of the representation of the people and to suggest the amendments which might be considered desirable. He was cordially supported by Fox, one of the Secretaries of State, and strongly opposed by Dundas, the Lord Advocate, whose arguments

Sheridan is reported to have answered, while he "plainly showed the necessity of an inquiry being appointed." The Ministry differing in opinion, each member was permitted to vote as he thought fit, the result being that Pitt's motion was lost by 20 votes. Sheridan's prediction in a letter to Thomas Grenville that "parliamentary reform will do at last in spite of you all" was verified by the event. Yet those who were of his mind had long to wait, and Thomas Grenville was perhaps the only person of his acquaintance who lived to see its fulfilment. Macaulay has pointed out that the division which shelved Parliamentary Reform in 1782, by a majority of 20, was less disheartening than any taken in the House of Commons till 1831, when the majorities in its favour were overwhelming.

Another interesting reference in the letter is that to Rodney's victory, which almost revengeed the humiliation of Cornwallis at Yorktown. The triumph gained there by Washington and Rochambeau, was largely due to the support of a French fleet commanded by Count de Grasse. When Rodney captured or destroyed each of the vessels in this fleet and took De Grasse prisoner, he both revived the drooping spirits of his countrymen, and justified the negociators for peace with France and America holding a haughtier tone and demanding the terms of conquerors instead of meekly accepting those of suppliants.¹ On the 26th of

¹ Fox wrote to Thomas Grenville on the same day as Sheridan and said, "I envy you the pleasure of announcing the news from the West Indies, with all the modest insolence that belongs to the occasion."

May, Sheridan again wrote to Thomas Grenville from St. James's and he did so semi-officially: "Charles [Fox] not being well, I write to you at his desire, that you may not be surprised at having no private letter from him with the despatch which Mr. Oswald brings you. There is not room, I believe, for much communication of any very private nature on the subject of your instructions and situation, as his public letter, you will see, is very sincerely to the purpose. If anything in it admits of modification, or is not to be very literally taken, I should conceive it to be the recommendation of explicitness with Oswald; on which subject I own I have suggested doubts; and Charles wishes you to have a caution for your own discretion to make use of.

"I perceive uniformly (from our intercepted information) that all these *city* negotiators—Mr. Wentworths, Bourdeaux, etc.—insinuate themselves into these sort of affairs merely for private advantages, and make their trust principally subservient to stock-jobbing views, on which subject there appears to be a surprising communication with Paris. Mr. Oswald's officiousness in bringing over your despatch, and other things I have been told since by those who know him, lead me to form this kind of opinion of him; but you will judge where this will apply to any confidence that should be placed in him.

"Surely, whatever the preliminaries of a treaty with France may be, it would be our interest, if we could, to drop even mentioning the Americans in them; at least, the seeming to grant anything to

them as at the requisition of France. France now denies our ceding Independence to America to be anything given to them, and declines to allow for it. In my opinion it would be wiser in them to insist ostentatiously (and even to make a point of allowing something for it) on the Independence of America being as the first article of their treating ; and this would for ever furnish them with a claim on the friendship and confidence of the Americans after the peace. But since they do not do this, surely it would not be bad policy, even if we gave up more to France in other respects, to prevent her appearing in the treaty as in any respect the champion of America, or as having made any claims for her ; we giving her up everything she wants equally, and her future confidence and alliance being such an object to us.

“ Were I the Minister, I would give France an island or two to choose, if it would expose her selfishness, sooner than let her gain the *esteem of the Americans* by claiming anything essential for them in apparent preference to her own interest and ambition. All people, of all descriptions, in America, will read the treaty of peace, whenever it comes, which France shall make with this country ; and if they should see there that she has claimed and got a good deal for herself, but has not appeared to have thought of them, however they may have profited in fact, it would certainly give us a great advantage in those sort of arguments and competitions which will arise after a peace ; whereas if it appears as a stipulated demand on the part of France that America

should be independent, it will for ever be a most handy record and argument for the French party in that country to work with ; and this, as things stand now, and as far as my poor judgment goes, appears not to be a very difficult thing to have either way. And so these are my politics on that subject for you.

“ You will find Rodney has taken some more ships. The unluckiness of his recall, I think, appears to increase in its ill effect and people don’t seem to fancy Pigott. Rolle has given notice that he will move on Thursday to know who advised His Majesty to recall Rodney ; and out of doors the talk is the same. Charles gave [Governor] Johnstone, who had been very violent on the subject the other day, an excellent trimming ; but there was a good deal of coy with the other.

“ The arming plan don’t seem to take at all ; we have not yet heard from Ireland since Burgoyne took them over a Constitution.

“ There is nothing new or old to tell you, but there is a most untimely sort of an influenza which every creature catches. You must not mind the badness of my scrawl : and let me hear from you. Does Lafayette join your consultation dinners with Franklin, as some of our Roupell intelligence sets forth ? I take it for granted the French Ministers will think it a point of spirit to seem rather less desirous of peace since their defeat in the West.

“ Howe is still off the Texel and the Dutch safe within.

"What mere politics I write to you! One might as well be a newspaper editor at once, I believe, as anything that politics can make one: but all other pursuits are as idle and unsatisfactory, and that's a comfort."

The only part of the foregoing letter which requires explanation is that relating to Admiral Rodney. He had embarrassed the official members of the Whig party by his splendid victory over De Grasse. The tables were so completely turned that a vote of thanks had to be proposed in the House of Commons by Fox, his colleague in the representation of Westminster, who had denounced his conduct at St. Eustatia and was a party to his recall. The public, as well as the West Indian planters and their friends, condemned Rodney's wholesale plundering, though they were gratified by his conquests. As Horace Walpole phrased it: "Admiral Rodney had a little over-gilt his own statue."¹

The change in the public sentiment, as well as a matter relating to Pitt which is but little known, cannot be told better than in the words of Walpole to Sir Horace Mann:—"Rodney was recalled by the New Admiralty, but recovers from his falls with marvellous agility. The late Ministers are thus robbed of a victory that ought to have been theirs; but the mob do not look into the almanack. The city of Westminster had just nominated our young Cicero, Mr. William Pitt, to replace Sir George at the next general election; the latter being a little under a cloud from his rapacity at St. Eustatia.

¹ "Letters," vol. viii., p. 93.

Now, Mr. Pitt must exert some rhetorical modesty, and beg not to dethrone a hero."¹

The Marquess of Rockingham died on the 1st of July; on Thursday the 4th, Sheridan sent to Thomas Grenville his last letter as Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs: "Knowing that you very much dislike your situation, I don't know how to call ill news what I am now going to inform you of. Charles [Fox] has this day resigned the seals [of office]; as he is much engaged I have undertaken to let you know this event, and make the last exercise of our office the sending a messenger to you, as it would be certainly unfair to lose a single hour in assisting you in your release. I understand you cannot leave Paris without leave from hence, as you have the King's commission; but by sending this directly, it will be in your own hands to require that leave in as peremptory terms as you please.

"What relates to Lord Rockingham's death you are informed of. The day before it happened Charles [Fox] made a question in the Cabinet on the policy of not reserving the Independence of America as a matter of treaty and the price of a peace, but to grant it at once unconditionally; on which he was beat. And immediately on Lord Rockingham's death, Lord Shelburne informs them that he is to be First Lord of the Treasury and the

¹ "Letters," vol. viii., p. 222. When the General Election took place Rodney had become a member of the House of Lords, and then William Pitt discredibly exerted himself to hinder Fox from representing the City of Westminster in Parliament.

King's Minister, though *against his wish*, etc., etc. They proposed the Duke of Portland, which the King refused; and after a great deal of idle negotiation, in which it was evident there was no power left with our friends, the measure of to-day was determined on. Lord John Cavendish goes out with Charles, Keppel follows: but to his shame, in my opinion, the *Duke of Richmond*, I believe, will remain. Mr. Pitt joins Shelburne, and will be either Chancellor of the Exchequer or Secretary of State. For the rest, it is not known whether they will make up out of the old set, or take up new. Conway also will stay. . . .¹

"And so begins a new Opposition; but wofully thinned and disconcerted, I fear. I am sure, however, that you will think what has been done was right. Fitzpatrick is here, but returning to Ireland; where, however, neither he nor the Duke [of Portland] will remain. I write in great haste, which you must excuse."²

Even if the life of the Marquess of Rockingham had been prolonged, his second Administration would have soon collapsed. During the three months of his Premiership, the members of the Cabinet were at variance. George the Third foresaw this when he had grudgingly accepted Lord Rockingham as Lord

¹ The sentence omitted here is quoted at p. 396 of this volume.

² The Letters from Sheridan to Thomas Grenville which I have quoted in this chapter, passed into the possession of the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, and were printed by him in his "Memoirs of the Courts and Cabinets of George III.," vol. i., pp. 27, 54.

North's successor and deplored with childish petulance what he called Lord North's desertion, when he had ordered his yacht to be prepared for a voyage across the channel and announced his intention of retiring to Hanover and happiness, and when he had ruefully written to Lord North that his "mind [was] truly tore to pieces."¹ For twelve years, with Lord North as his Prime Minister, he had felt that he was fulfilling his German mother's injunction, "Now, George, be King." He had governed as well as reigned. Mr. Bagehot truly writes :—"In the so-called Government of Lord North, George III. was the Government."²

Rockingham was an honest but not a brilliant statesman who had as firm a conviction as Walpole that the Revolution of 1688 ought to be interpreted to mean placing Parliament above the Crown; his earnestness in practising as well as holding this belief had rendered Rockingham obnoxious to the King and disqualified him, in his opinion, for holding high office. George the Third was aware that Shelburne and Rockingham were on bad terms and, though detesting Shelburne, whom he had opprobriously nicknamed "the Jesuit of Berkeley Square," he thought that Shelburne might prove more pliable than Rockingham. Finding it impossible, however, to constitute a Ministry without placing Rockingham at its head, he reluctantly consented to the arrangement with the mental reservation of substituting Shelburne whenever a plausible occasion occurred.

¹ "Correspondence of George III.," vol. ii., p. 427.

² Bagehot's "English Constitution," p. 84.

Rockingham had scarcely drawn his last breath before the King appointed Shelburne to the office of Prime Minister.¹

The party in the Cabinet which followed the lead of Fox desired that the Duke of Portland should act as figure-head in an Administration of which Fox would be the governing spirit. When Shelburne announced that he was First Lord of the Treasury, several of his old colleagues refused to serve under him. Among them, Lord John Cavendish, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, set a pernicious example. Had he consented to succeed Shelburne as Secretary of State, Fox would have remained in office; William Pitt would have become Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Shelburne Administration might have made a splendid mark in history. But personal pique prevailed. Fox

¹ Lord Rockingham died on the 1st of July; on the same day the King wrote to Shelburne: "Lord Shelburne must remember that when in March I was obliged to change my Ministry I called upon him to form a new one, and proposed his taking the employment of First Lord of the Treasury, which he declined to accommodate Lord Rockingham. The vacancy of that office makes me return to my original idea, and offer it to him on the present occasion, and with the fullest political confidence; indeed he has had a sample of it, by my conduct towards him since his return to my service. I desire he will therefore see the Chancellor, the Duke of Grafton, and others, either in or out of office, and collect their opinions fully, that he may be able to state something to me on Wednesday. He is at liberty to mention my intentions with regard to him, and to set forward in forming a plan for my inspection. The letter I wrote this morning and the conversations I have held with him previous to it, are the fullest instructions I can give on the subject."—"Life of Shelburne," by Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, vol. iii., pp. 222, 223.

and Lord John Cavendish, Lord Althorpe and Mr. Montagu, Lords of the Treasury, Mr. Lee, the Solicitor-General, the Duke of Portland, Colonel Fitzpatrick, Burke and Sheridan resigned their respective offices, Sheridan endeavouring to justify his conduct and that of his colleagues by saying, "Those who go out are right, for there is really no question whether, having lost their power, they ought to stay and lose their characters."

There was no finessing in Sheridan's resignation. He acted in perfect good faith. He foresaw that the ranks of the Opposition, which he voluntarily re-entered, had been thinned and weakened to a degree which was equivalent to paralysis. He honestly believed that the system of Government of which Lord North had been the docile instrument would be continued by Shelburne with greater skill, and that the baleful preponderance of the Crown would be perpetuated in larger measure. Both Fox and Sheridan were well-intentioned when they declined to serve under Shelburne whom they distrusted and misinterpreted, and of whose assumed aims they disapproved. They were perfectly consistent and entirely mistaken. The judicious critic who enjoys the inestimable advantage of being supremely wise after the event, must pronounce their action a most unfortunate and blundering move in the political game.

XII.

CABINET-MAKING AND COALITION.

WHENEVER personality has an undue weight in politics, jealousies are engendered and disaster follows. Statesmen who are regarded as patterns of abnegation and high-principled to the backbone, and allege that the good of their country is their only joy, are not exempt from mortal frailties, and they frequently cloak themselves in patriotism to subserve their ambition and enable them to deal their rivals a death-blow. Both Fox and Shelburne allowed their personal antipathies to regulate their conduct; neither would acknowledge or submit to the supremacy of the other and these two men, whose joint action would have kept the King in check and muzzled his so-called friends, contributed by their foolish and blind animosity to discredit the noble cause of constitutional Government. Towards the end of their lives they both admitted that they had been in the wrong, and had entirely misunderstood each other. If Shelburne, then Marquess of Lansdowne, had lived another year, he might have been Fox's colleague in the Ministry of all the Talents.

In 1782, however, the mutual enmities were active which had expired before 1806, and Shelburne was

the victim of factious opposition in Parliament, his overthrow being accomplished by an unholy alliance between the followers of North and Fox, who banded themselves together in opposition to the terms of a general peace which had been negotiated during Shelburne's Premiership. It is true that a desire to displace the Prime Minister, as William Pitt maintained, was the mainspring of the movement, yet it cannot be denied that some of the concessions to foreign Powers, which Shelburne and his colleagues had sanctioned, were fair subjects of controversy and were clearly open to adverse criticism on the ground of policy. In a debate on the Preliminary Articles of Peace, Sheridan availed himself of an opportunity to deprecate the conduct of the Government, and Lord John Cavendish proposed a motion of censure upon them which was carried by a majority of 16. While replying to this speech and others, William Pitt took special notice of Sheridan's criticisms and remarked that "no man admired more than he did the abilities of that Honourable gentleman, the elegant sallies of his thought, the gay effusions of his fancy, his dramatic turns, and his epigrammatic points ; and if they were reserved for the proper stage they would no doubt receive the plaudits of the audience ; and it would be his fortune *sui plausu gaudere theatri*. But this was not the proper scene for the exhibition of these elegancies ; and he therefore must beg leave to call the attention of the House to the serious consideration of the very important question then before them."

When Pitt sat down, Sheridan rose and, readily obtaining leave to make an explanation, he intimated

that he would not comment on the sort of personality which the Right Hon. gentleman had thought proper to introduce: "He need not comment on it; the propriety, the taste, the gentlemanly point of it must have been obvious to the House. But let me assure the Rt. Hon. gentleman, that I do now, and will at any time when he chooses to repeat this sort of allusion, meet it with the most sincere good humour. Nay, I will say more. Flattered and encouraged by the Rt. Hon. gentleman's panegyric on my talents, if I ever again engage in the compositions he alludes to, I may be tempted to an act of presumption, to attempt an improvement on one of Ben Jonson's best characters, the character of the Angry Boy in—*The Alchemist*."¹

¹ "The Parliamentary History," vol. xxiii., pp. 490, 491. Sheridan was in the habit of writing notes to his brother-in-law, Richard Tickell, in which he made humorous comments on current events such as might now find a place in *Punch*. He wrote as follows after his passage of arms with Pitt: "Advertisement Extraordinary. We hear that, in consequence of a hint, lately given in the House of Commons, the play of *The Alchemist* is certainly to be performed by a set of gentlemen for our diversion, in a private apartment of Buckingham House. The characters, thus described in the old editions of Ben Jonson, are to be represented in the following manner—the practice of men playing the female parts being adopted:

Subtle (<i>The Alchemist</i>)	...	...	Lord Shelburne.
Face (<i>The Housekeeper</i>)	...	...	The Lord Chancellor.
Doll Common (<i>Their Colleague</i>)	...	...	The Lord Advocate.
Drugger (<i>The Tobacco-man</i>)	...	...	Lord Effingham.
Epicure Mammon	...	...	Mr. Rigby.
Tribulation	...	...	Dr. Jenkinson.
Ananias (<i>A Little Pastor</i>)	...	...	Mr. Hull.
Kastril (<i>The Angry Boy</i>)	...	...	Mr. W. Pitt.
Dame Pliant	...	...	General Conway.
		and	
Surly	...	...	His Majesty."

Four days after the House of Commons had disapproved of the Preliminary Articles of Peace, Lord John Cavendish moved their direct condemnation. William Pitt produced one of his greatest oratorical effects when replying to Fox. He knew that Fox and North had joined forces, and that the defeat of the Administration of which he was an important member was certain. He affirmed, with impassioned emphasis, that the object of his opponents was simply to displace the advisers of the King; that they were as unprincipled as they were audacious, and he declared with all the vehemence of personal conviction and in accents which were not wholly rhetorical:—
 “It is the Earl of Shelburne alone whom the movers of this question are desirous to wound. This is the object which has raised the storm of faction; this is the aim of the unnatural coalition to which I have alluded. If, however, the baneful alliance is not already formed, if this ill-omened marriage is not already solemnized, I know a just and lawful impediment, and in the name of the public safety, I here forbid the banns.”¹

From the 21st of February, 1783, till the 2nd of April in that year, the business of the country was conducted by Ministers who held office till the appointment of their successors had been officially declared. This was due to the King, who, in the words of Mr. Bagehot, “was always resisting what ought to be and prolonging what ought not to be.”² He now struggled, with wrongly-directed energy,

¹ “The Parliamentary History,” vol. xxiii., p. 552.

² “The English Constitution,” p. 68.

against calling to his counsels the men who had gained the confidence of the House of Commons.

The triumphant Opposition had internal difficulties to surmount. Unpublished letters of Mrs. Tickell to her sister contain many interesting references to Sheridan's activity during the interregnum. She wrote in one of them :—" Sheridan is worth all their party to them almost at this critical point ; but you know how indefatigable he is in politics and indeed it's well he is, for I suppose he told you how your friend Charles [Fox] was engaged the night they wanted him at a consultation of the greatest importance at the Duke of Portland's. Tickell says if it was not for Sheridan he don't know how they would do—for he is of more consequence to them now than he has ever been."¹

When a Coalition Ministry was formed with the Duke of Portland at its head, and with Fox and North as Secretaries of State, the office of a Secretary to the Treasury was confided to Sheridan, an office which then was far more important than it is at present, owing to the enormous amount of patronage which its holder could dispense or control. He was not under any illusion as to the stability of the Coalition. Burke was enthusiastic in approving of its formation, being far more eager than Sheridan to return to office, and that of Paymaster to the Forces being congenial to him chiefly because, as he avowed, the salary amounted to £4,000 a year. If Fox had

¹ In another of these letters a saying by Jekyll has been preserved. He said, after seeing bills pasted up in favour of Pitt, it verified the old proverb, "the weakest goes to the wall."

joined Pitt, as he might have done, and had overcome his hereditary aversion to Shelburne being Prime Minister, a stable Government would then have been formed which could have resisted the King's sinister attacks, and legislated for the benefit of the nation in defiance of any cabal.

The Coalition was unpopular in the country and loathed by the King, who gave expression to his inmost feelings with more frankness than dignity. On the 1st of April, 1783, being the day before North and Fox entered office, he wrote to Lord Temple, whom Shelburne had appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland: "Since the conversation I had with Mr. William Grenville on the 16th of last month, I have continued every possible means of forming an Administration; an experience of now above twenty-two years convinces me that it is impossible to erect a stable one within the narrow bounds of any faction, for none deserve the appellation of party; and that in an age when disobedience to law and authority is as prevalent as a thirst after changes in the best of all political Constitutions, it requires temper and sagacity to stem these evils, which alone can be expected from a collection of the best and most calm heads and hearts the Kingdom possesses.

"Judge, therefore, of the uneasiness of my mind, at having been thwarted in every attempt to keep the administration of public affairs out of the hands of the most unprincipled coalition the annals of this or any other nation can equal. I have withstood it till not a single man is willing to come to

my assistance, and till the House of Commons has taken every step, but insisting on this faction being by name elected Ministers.

“To end a conflict which stops every wheel of Government, and which would affect public credit if it continued much longer, I intend this night to acquaint that *grateful* Lord North, that the seven Cabinet Counsellors the coalition has named shall kiss hands to-morrow, and then form their arrangements, as [in] the former negotiation they did not condescend to open to[o] many of their intentions.

“A Ministry which I have avowedly attempted to avoid, by calling on every other description of men, cannot be supposed to have either my favour or confidence ; and as such, I shall most certainly refuse any honours they may ask for. I trust the eyes of the nation will soon be opened, as my sorrow may prove fatal to my health if I remain long in this thralldom. I trust you will be steady in your attachment to me, and ready to join other honest men in watching the conduct of this unnatural combination, and I hope many months will not elapse before the Grenvilles, the Pitts, and other men of abilities and character will relieve me from a situation that nothing could have compelled me to submit to, but the supposition that no other means remained of preventing the public finances from being materially affected.”¹

¹ “Courts and Cabinets of George the Third,” by the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, vol. i., pp. 218, 219. The Earl Temple, to whom George the Third unbosomed himself afterwards, acted as his emissary to inform the members of the House of Lords that the Peers who voted for the India Bill of the Coalition Administration would be accounted the King’s enemies.

While the King detested the Coalition out of dread lest it should keep the exercise of his personal power within constitutional limits, the general public considered it an immoral conjunction of statesmen for the sake of regaining place. It was remembered that Fox had denounced North as an infamous man who was engaged in overthrowing the Constitution, while North had retorted that Fox was a rank traitor to his country. Those who recalled what these two statesmen said of each other would not have been surprised if either had attempted, on purely patriotic grounds, to end the other's life in the manner prescribed for those who are guilty of high treason ; but, to see them seated side by side in Parliament and acting together in the same Administration appeared to be subversive alike of political morality and public decency.

Fox and North had used stronger language about each other than was either seemly or just ; but, when they came together on a friendly footing and compared notes, they found that they had more in common than they supposed. They were doubtless actuated by the forgiving spirit which sometimes animates unemployed and ambitious statesmen when there is a prospect of their wishes being gratified. North publicly declared that he was " irreconcilable to no man " ; he also stated that, though Fox's comments upon his policy had been very harsh and bitter, yet they had never been directed against his personal integrity. Fox considered he had done enough to disarm criticism by his declaration in the House of Commons on the 17th of February, 1783 :

—"That I shall have the honour of concurring with the noble Lord in the blue ribbon [Lord North] on the present question is very certain ; and, if men of honour can meet on points of general national concern, I see no reason for calling such a meeting an unnatural conjunction. It is neither wise nor noble to keep up animosities for ever. It is neither just nor candid to keep up animosity when the cause of it is no more. It is not in my nature to bear malice, or to live in ill-will. My friendships are perpetual. but my enmities are not so."¹ These sentiments were as genuine as they are praiseworthy. Fox's own character could not be depicted in truer phrases.

A statesman speaks and acts in the light of day and his admirers naturally take him at his word. When he has convinced them of his sincerity in following a particular course, he cannot make them feel that he is equally in the right when, in the contorted phrase of Lord Castlereagh, "he turns his back upon himself." Moreover, the dictum of Disraeli that "England does not love coalitions" is justified by experience. Those who consent to sink minor differences, in order to overthrow rivals and carry on the Government in their stead, lose half their power, even supposing them to be earnest and conscientious men. They endeavour to exercise a double allegiance and they inevitably fail. Some of their most cherished convictions must remain dormant while measures are executed of which they disapprove, or else a split will occur and, at the best, the two parties which have coalesced must agree to

¹ "Speeches," vol. ii., p. 122.

"mark time," lest by any marching forward, they part company. Sheridan summed up the case in a masterly way, after the Coalition Administration had been ignominiously dismissed from office by the King and while the struggle between William Pitt and the majority of the House of Commons was pending: "The prejudices of the public all concurred to prevent the Coalition. The middling classes of the people, for whom he had the highest respect, and to whom the House of Commons must look for support in every emergency sooner than to the great, were not certainly the best qualified to judge of nice and refined points of politics. Accustomed to judge of measures by men, he apprehended they would give themselves no time to examine the principles, motives and grounds of a Coalition; but condemn it on the first appearance, merely because it was composed of men who had long been political enemies. On these grounds, full of apprehension for the character of his right honourable friend [Fox] he most certainly gave him his advice against a Coalition."¹

The Administration of Fox and North, with the Duke of Portland as nominal head, entered office on the 2nd of April and was peremptorily dismissed by the King on the 18th of the following December. While Secretary to the Treasury, Sheridan addressed the House of Commons twenty-six times on questions relating to his department, and he displayed a familiarity with business which was highly commendable. He had to defend the Chancellor of the

¹ "Speeches," vol. i., p. 67.

Exchequer, Lord John Cavendish, when his conduct was unfairly impugned by William Pitt and others, no allowance having been made for the difficulty of presenting a Budget and arranging for the issue of a loan of twelve millions within ten days after entering office. Lord John Cavendish was improperly charged with corrupt action and it was hinted that Sheridan was not blameless. Mr. Rolle moved on the 16th of April for a return of the subscribers to the loan, and he was supported by Lord John and by Sheridan, who said, "What peculiarly rendered the present motion a matter agreeable to his mind was the recollection of the many indirect insinuations that might create a suspicion in the minds of the public which had been thrown out on the preceding day. Insinuations and surmises, whispered with an affected caution, and hinted by halves, often did more towards imposing conviction on the minds of the credulous than the most direct charge could effect."

He concluded by assuring the House, "in the most solemn manner, that he had neither directly nor indirectly interfered with regard to the present loan." At the time, no one called in question his skill and assiduity in discharging the duties of his office, and those who have done so since can neither have ascertained the opinion of contemporaries, nor taken the pains to read his speeches.

The great measure for the government of India which Burke framed, which Fox fathered and introduced into the House and on which the Administration staked its existence, led to its downfall. Nothing else which the Coalition had proposed gave the King

greater anxiety. He foresaw that, if the Bill became law, his illegitimate influence would be lessened, while the statesmen whom he hated would possess extensive patronage and become responsible for its exercise to the nation alone. William Pitt professed to share the King's fears and heartily sympathize with him, alleging as a reason for detesting and rejecting the Bill, that it would bring an "accession of power to the Minister of this day" [Fox]. He repeated this statement in private. It is difficult to believe that a man of his astuteness could really be a dupe in this matter. Two days after using the words which I have quoted from the opening of his speech, he wrote to the Duke of Rutland:—"We are in the midst of a contest, and I think approaching *to a crisis*. The Bill which Fox has brought in relative to India will be, one way or other, decisive for or against the Coalition. It is, I think, the boldest and most unconstitutional measure ever attempted, transferring at one stroke, in spite of all charters and compacts, the immense patronage and influence of the East to *Charles Fox, in or out of office*."¹

Five years later, when another Bill on the same subject was introduced by the Administration over which Pitt presided, Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, who had strenuously opposed the one which Fox championed, wrote that "the two East India Bills differed more from each other in name than reality," and Fox affirmed in the House:—"It will

¹ "Correspondence between Pitt and the Duke of Rutland," p. 4.

be no longer clamoured through the country that I am the violator of chartered rights, or the usurper of the powers of the East India Company. Had the right honourable member [William Pitt] acted in the same open and fair way in 1783, all that abuse which I have sustained, all that clamour which has been excited, all that popular frenzy which disgraced the Kingdom from one end of it to the other, never would have been provoked. He would then have said : 'You take away the Company's charter ; there I am with you ; the flagrant abuses the Company have made of it could not have been put an end to unless you did so ! You suspend all their rights ; there again I am with you ; the suspension is necessary for their salvation ! You assume the complete management and control of all the Company's affairs, civil and military, and the disposition and application of all their revenues ; in all this you do right ; such an assumption is requisite to give effect to your system ! But you put these powers into the hand of a Board of Commissioners appointed by Parliament ; there you do wrong, and there I am not with you. I contend that a Board of Control, appointed by the Crown, is the proper Board to entrust all these powers with.' Upon that single point ought to have rested the whole dispute, for that is the only essential difference between the Bills."¹

Dundas became the head of the Board of Control established by Pitt's East India Act, and for many

¹ "Speeches of Charles James Fox," vol. iii., p. 374. Sheridan's mastery of the subject is displayed in his "Comparative statement" of the two Bills brought in by Pitt and Fox, which was published in 1788 and soon went through three editions.

years he exercised the patronage in the interest of the Tory party, which Pitt thought could not be entrusted to any man without violating the Constitution and imperilling the existence of the country.

The dismissal of the Coalition Administration was the most high-handed of George the Third's acts and the beginning of the greatest parliamentary struggle of his reign. Earl Temple accepted the seals of office which were delivered up by Fox and North at the express command of the King, and for a short time he acted as two Secretaries of State rolled into one. William Pitt was entrusted with the formation of a new Ministry in which Lord Shelburne, his patron, was not offered any office and Lord Temple accepted none because the Dukedom which he coveted was denied to him. However, William Pitt constituted an Administration in which he was First Lord of the Treasury in succession to the Duke of Portland, and Chancellor of the Exchequer in succession to Lord John Cavendish. He became leader of the House of Commons, in which he was the only Cabinet Minister, and he nominated a Cabinet in which he was the only Commoner. At the age of twenty-three he occupied the most exalted and responsible office under the Crown.

Though Pitt was the leader of the House, the power rested for a time with North and Fox, the chiefs of the Opposition, of which the members far out-numbered the followers of the Prime Minister. The House of Commons was the theatre of an unprecedented struggle from the third week in December, 1783.

till the last week in March, 1784. Pitt felt strong in the immediate support of the King, on which he could implicitly depend, and in the indirect support of the country, upon which he believed that he could rely. He would not resign, despite any hostile vote. He stood his ground with the tenacity of despair, and his determined attitude in the presence of terrible odds was regarded with as great respect as disappointment by rabid opponents. During debates which were alike acrimonious and exciting, some of Sheridan's utterances were a welcome relief on account of their wit and their geniality. The supporters of the Ministry laboriously denounced the wickedness of the supporters of the Coalition and Sheridan happily turned the tables by saying, in defence of the Coalition, that "the more he looked at the Treasury Bench, the more his astonishment grew upon him. For there, the gentlemen who sat upon it were divided into parts, each of which was composed of a member who had supported the noble Lord in the blue ribbon [North] and of another who had opposed him. These gentlemen, speaking to each other, might thus address each other. One might say, 'I supported Lord North through the whole of his Administration, but left him at last when I found he had formed a Coalition with that abominable man Charles Fox.'

"The other might reply, 'And I joined Mr. Fox for many years in his opposition to Government, till at last I found it necessary to abandon him, when he disgraced himself by a Coalition with that abominable man Lord North!' If the state of the public credit,

and the funds, should become the subject of discussion in that House, one of the members of the Treasury Bench may very probably say, 'It was the cursed American war of Lord North that brought this ruin upon our funds.' This would instantly call up his friend on the same bench, who would immediately reply, 'No;—the American war was a just and constitutional war: it was the opposition given to it by the rebel-encourager Charles Fox, who caused the failure of it, and this brought ruin on the country.' Thus a Treasury, formed on anti-coalition principles, was itself a chain of coalitions. The grand Coalition, which was the butt of every man's invective, had begot other coalitions; but there was this difference between the parent and the offspring that, with the former, all was harmony, concord and union, while the latter retained the heterogeneous principles of their original opposition, which made them still a prey to discord and confusion. An honourable gentleman had said that the majority in the Coalition was formed of persons who represented the rotten Treasury boroughs, and who were brought in by the noble Lord in the blue ribbon, when he was at the head of the Treasury. But that reproach was ill-founded, for the Coalition had been purged of such members, some of whom, having spurned the hand that made them and turned their backs on their friend and benefactor, had found a happy asylum in the bosom of the Administration."¹

Neither the constitutional arguments of Fox nor

¹ "Parliamentary History," vol. xxiv., pp. 491, 492.

the bantering phrases of Sheridan availed to avert a dissolution of Parliament. In those days, the Prime Minister who was in office, when an appeal was made to the country, seldom failed to strengthen his power, provided the influence of the Court was exerted in his favour. The same thing is true of some countries in which the will of the people is supposed to prevail. But the leader of the Opposition in this country has the advantage at the present day of making promises without responsibility, and the chance of attaining to office out of gratitude for favours in the future which he cannot grant if he would. In 1784, however, William Pitt was as great an autocrat as an American or French President, or an Emperor of Russia, while he had the unbought sympathies of the majority of the electors on his side. He foolishly thought that, if he could exclude Fox from the House of Commons, his position would be still more secure, and his ill-judging friends strained the law to ensure the rejection of Fox. Though elected for Westminster by a majority of 236, the fact of his return was illegally withheld from Parliament for nearly a year, and Pitt approved of the High Bailiff of Westminster allowing political partisanship to interfere with the performance of his duty. The electors for the Kirkwall Boroughs chose Fox as their member and thus checkmated the indefensible and blundering tactics of Pitt. The Burgesses of Stafford returned Sheridan again. When the new Parliament met on the 19th of May, 1784, it was seen that 160 members who supported the Coalition had been rejected by the con-

stituencies. They were not inaptly nicknamed "Fox's Martyrs."

The feeling throughout the House of Commons was one of satisfaction at the reappearance of Sheridan. A political opponent of great ability and acuteness, who hated the Coalition, its members, and its works, and who steadfastly voted on the side of William Pitt, has transmitted to the present generation the prevailing impression concerning him in 1784: "Sheridan reappeared in the new House of Commons by Fox's side. He possessed a ductility and versatility of talents which no public man in our time has equalled, and these intellectual endowments were sustained by a suavity of temper that seemed to set at defiance all efforts to ruffle or discompose it. Playing with his irritable or angry antagonist, Sheridan exposed him by sallies of wit or attacked him with classic elegance of satire, performing this arduous task in the face of a crowded assembly without losing for an instant either his presence of mind, his facility of expression or his good humour. He wounded deepest, when he smiled, and convulsed his hearers with laughter while the object of his ridicule or animadversion was twisting under the lash. Pitt and Dundas, who presented the fairest marks for his attack, found by experience that, though they might repel, they could not confound, still less could they silence or vanquish him. In every attempt that they made, by introducing personalities or illiberal reflexions on his private life or dramatic occupations, to disconcert him, he turned their weapons on themselves.

The Right Hon. R. B. SHERIDAN,

, Presents the Bearer with

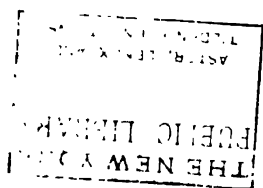
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**FACSIMILE OF TICKET ISSUED BY THE RIGHT HON. R. B. SHERIDAN
TO VOTERS AT ELECTION.**

Vol. i. To face p. 414.



“ Nor did he, while thus chastising his adversary, alter a muscle of his own countenance which, as well as his gestures, seemed to participate and display the unalterable serenity of his intellectual formation. Rarely did he elevate his voice, and never except in subservience to the dictates of his judgment, with the view to produce a corresponding effect on his audience. Yet he was always heard, generally listened to with eagerness, and could obtain a hearing at almost any hour. Burke, who wanted Sheridan's nice tact and his amenity of manner, was continually coughed down, and on those occasions he lost his temper. Even Fox often tired the House by the repetitions which he introduced into his speeches. Sheridan never abused their patience. Whenever he rose, they anticipated a rich repast of wit without acrimony, seasoned by allusions and citations the most delicate, yet obvious in their application.

“ At this period of his life, when he was not more than thirty-three years of age, his countenance and features had in them something peculiarly pleasing, indicative at once of intellect, humour and gaiety. All these characteristics played about his lips when speaking, and operated with inconceivable attraction ; for they anticipated, as it were, to the eye, the effect produced by his oratory on the ear, thus opening for him a sure way to the heart or the understanding. Even the tones of his voice, which were singularly mellifluous, aided the general effect of his eloquence ; nor was it accompanied by Burke's unpleasant Irish accent. Pitt's enunciation

was unquestionably more imposing, dignified and sonorous. Fox displayed more argument as well as vehemence; Burke possessed more fancy and enthusiasm; but Sheridan won his way by a sort of fascination."¹

¹ "Memoirs of Sir Nathaniel Wraxall," vol. iii., pp. 367, 368.

APPENDIX TO VOL. I.

HERNAN'S MISCELLANY. No. I.

"I will sit down and write for the good of the People—for (said I to myself, pulling off my spectacles, and drinking the remainder of my six penn'worth) it cannot be but people must be sick of these same rascally Politics. All last winter nothing but—'God defend me! 'tis tiresome to think of it—' I immediately flung the Pamphlet down on the table; and taking my hat and cain walked out of the Coffee-house.

*"I kept up as smart a pace as I could all the way home; for I felt myself full of something; and enjoyed my own thoughts so much, that I was afraid of digesting them lest any should escape me. At last I knocked at my own door—So! said I to the maid who opened it (for I never would keep a man: not, but what I could afford it—however, the reason is not material now) so! said I, with an unusual smile upon my face; and immediately sent her for [a quire] of paper, and half a hundred of pens—the only thing I had absolutely determined on, in my way from the Coffee-house. I had now got seated in my arm chair—I am an infirm old man! and I live on a second floor—when I began to ruminate on my project. The first thing that occurred to me (and certainly a very natural one) was, to examine my Common-place book. So I went to my desk, and took out my old faithful red-leather companion, who had long discharged the office of Treasurer to all my best hints and memorandums: but how was I surprised! when one of [the] first things that struck my eyes was the following memorandum, legibly written, and on one of my best sheets of Vellum. Mem. Oct. 20th. 1769—*Left the Grecian [coffee-house] after having read**

—s *Poems* ; with a determined resolution to write a periodical paper, in order to reform the vitiated taste of the age ; but, coming home and finding my fire out, and my maid gone abroad, was obliged to defer the execution of my plan to another opportunity ! Now tho' this event had absolutely slip'd my memory, I now recollected it perfectly—aye, so my fire *was* out indeed ; and my maid *did* go abroad sure enough—'Good Heavens !' said I, 'How great events depend upon little circumstances.' However, I looked upon this as a memento for me no longer to trifle away my time and resolution ; and thus I began to reason—I mean, I would have reasoned, had I not been interrupted by a noise of some one coming upstairs. By the alternate thump upon the steps, I soon discovered it must be my own and intimate friend Rudliche. [Crabtree was the name first chosen for this personage.] What (thought I) I suppose that careless maid on going to the stationer's left the door on a jar, and Rudliche finding it so has step'd in without ceremony. Od's my life ! to be interrupted at such a time as this ! I wish with all my soul his wooden leg was in his throat ! I argued thus with myself, while my friend was on the stairs : for it must be obvious to every one, that any man who, by any accident whatsoever, has lost his own leg, and so, becomes necessitated to make use of a wooden leg, cannot (from the nature of things) with that wooden leg, make such expedition upstairs, as a man who, not having lost his own leg, is not obliged to make use of a wooden one. The truth of this will appear still more evident, if we suppose those stairs to be decayed stairs (which I solemnly declare to be the case with mine, tho' I have hinted the matter to my landlord above fifty times). But to return,—in walked Rudliche—'so ! Fred'—'so ! Bob'—'were you at the Grecian to-day ?' 'I just step'd in'—'well, any news ?'—'no, no, there was no news.' Now as Bob and I saw one another almost every day, we seldom abounded in conversation : so, having settled one material point, he sat in his usual posture, looking at the fire, and beating the dust out of his wooden leg, when I perceived he was just going to touch upon *the* other subject ; but, having by chance cast his eye on my face, and finding, (I suppose) something extraordinary in my countenance, he immediately drop'd all concern for the weather, and putting his

hand into his pocket (as if he meant to find what he was going to say, under pretence of feeling for his tobacco-box) 'Hernan !' (he began) 'why man you look for all the world as if you had been thinking of something'—'Yes,' replied I, smiling (that is not actually smiling, but with a conscious something in my face) 'I have indeed been *thinking* a little.' 'What is't a secret?'—'O, nothing very material'—There ensued a pause—which I employ'd in considering whether I should reveal my scheme to Bob; and Bob in trying to disengage his thumb from the string of his cain, as if he were preparing to take his leave.

"This latter action, with the great desire I had of disburthening myself, made me instantly resolve to lay my whole plan before him. 'Bob,' said I, (He immediately quitted his thumb) 'you remarked that I looked as if I had been thinking of something—' 'your remark is just, and I'll tell you the subject of my thought. You know, Bob, that I always had a strong passion for Literature—you have often seen my collection of Books—not very large indeed—However I believe that I have read every volume of it twice over (excepting [Warburton's] "*Divine Legation of Moses*" and . . . *Lives of the most notorious Malefactors*) and I am now determined to profit by them.' I concluded with a very significant nod—but, Good Heavens! how mortified was I to find both my speech, and my nod thrown away, when Rudliche calmly replied, with the true phlegm of Ignorance, 'My dear Friend, I think your resolution in regard to your books a very prudent one, but I do not perfectly conceive your plan as to the *profit*; for tho' your volumes may be very curious, yet you know they are most of them second-hand!'—I was so vex'd at the fellow's stupidity, that I had a great mind to punish him by not disclosing a syllable more. However at last my vanity got the better of my resentment, and I explained to him the whole matter.—There is no point in the world I am more convinced of, than that an intimate acquaintance with great abilities lessens them in them [*sic*] eyes of people of weak judgment, as objects of great bulk lose their dignity, when we become too familiar with them. This was precisely the case with Rudliche, who having for these thirty years (or at least I am sure above nine and twenty years) been acquainted with my—I'll not call them *great* abilities—but with my abilities whatever they

are, is become so reconciled to my genius and so familiar with my wit, and humour as that (as the proverb justly remarks will be the case) he seems to hold them in some contempt."

THE STORY OF A FORGERY, REPRINTED FROM *THE ATHENÆUM* FOR THE 26TH OF JANUARY, 1895.

Moore's "Memoirs" of Sheridan were published in September 1825. In the October number of *The Gentleman's Magazine* for that year they are reviewed at length, and a reference is made in the review to an "interesting letter which commences the present number." An editorial comment on that letter begins:

"By the kindness of a valued literary friend, we are enabled to present to our readers the following original and interesting letter from the pen of the accomplished Miss Linley (afterwards Mrs. Sheridan), addressed to her confidential friend Miss Saunders. . . . This autobiographical sketch of the most eventful period of her life will be regarded as a literary curiosity."

A review of Moore's work appeared in *The Quarterly* for March, 1826. Lockhart wrote it, my authority for saying so being Sir Walter Scott, who made the following entry in his "Journal," dated April 9th, 1826: "Lockhart's *Review*. Don't like his article on Sheridan's life. There is no breadth in it, no general views, the whole flung away in smart but party criticism." In the course of the review, Lockhart refers to the "very curious letter in *The Gentleman's Magazine*," which, he thinks, "throws light not to be resisted on what Mr. Moore has apparently chosen to leave in darkness and mystery." Lockhart would have used different words if he had known that Moore could not have seen this letter when writing his "Memoirs" of Sheridan, seeing that it was forged after the publication of Moore's work. In a preface to the fifth edition, which appeared in 1827, Moore refers to the letter in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and calls it a "clumsy forgery." The Hon. Caroline Norton, a grand-daughter of Sheridan, wrote an article on him in *Macmillan's Magazine* for January, 1861, in which she styles the letter a "foolish forgery." After a careful perusal of it, I have arrived at the conclusion that eighteen statements in it could not have been penned by Miss Linley, unless she chose to say what she knew to be the reverse of facts within her own knowledge and experience, a thing which I consider to

Bath May 2 1770

you would not
I confess myself pretty to blame in my behaviour
to him, but I cannot explain myself on this
subject, without acquainting you with the
first cause of every uneasiness and irritation
I have since been guilty of; let me then my
Dear Girl, by your patience, for though my Ho

FORCED LETTER ATTRIBUTED TO MISS LINLEY.

Vol. i. To face p. 400.

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be utterly incredible. Any sensible reader will agree with me when I give a few examples in support of this decision. At the beginning of the fourth paragraph she is made to say : " At the age of twelve years, I was brought from the country, where I had been all my life." She was born in Bath in 1755, where she lived till her marriage in 1773. She is made to add, " I was led into scenes of dissipation," these scenes being concerts in Bath and oratorios in Wells, Bristol, Oxford, and Cambridge. Once only did she attend a masked ball before marriage, and I have a letter in my possession in which she vows that she would not willingly attend another. The letter attributed to her is addressed to her bosom friend Miss Saunders, of whom nothing is known, and to whom there is no reference in the many letters from her father, her brother, herself, and her sister which are preserved. In this letter her health is said to have been impaired, and she is made to say that she was sent to the Hot Wells to drink the water ; this is true of what occurred in 1792, but not of anything that happened before 1772, the date given in *The Gentleman's Magazine*. She is said to have seen Miss Saunders at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Norton ; but Mr. and Mrs. Norton are as mythical personages as Miss Saunders. She is made to write that Mrs. Sheridan, the mother of Richard Brinsley, " called by Mathew's desire to know the reason why they had not seen me that day." The difficulty here is how Mrs. Sheridan could have done so, seeing that she died in 1766, the alleged call being made in 1772 ! This is not more puzzling than Miss Linley being made to describe what occurred while she was insensible, after having been made in print to poison herself. The forger was right in setting forth impossibilities. They are always accepted with implicit faith by the credulous.

I have recently had in my temporary custody the manuscript of the forged letter which the editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine* received from " a valued literary friend." The handwriting has not the slightest resemblance to that of Miss Linley. The letter has been edited, the printed version differing in several particulars from the manuscript. The editor was better informed than his " valued literary friend." That unnamed person dated the letter " Bath, May 2, 1770." The circumstances narrated in it must

have occurred, if they ever did occur, in May, 1772; accordingly, the right year appears in print. Neither the "friend" nor the "editor" knew that Miss Linley had an invariable manner of signing her name. When single, she ended her letters either with "Eliza" or her initials "E. A. L." When married, she sometimes wrote "E. L. Sheridan," but her ordinary signature was "E. A. S." At the end of the postscript to the printed letter the signature is "E. Linley." In the manuscript, the initials "E. L." appear before the postscript.

That the letter is a forgery is, in my opinion, beyond all question. Who the forger was I cannot surmise. It is not improbable, I think, that he and the editor of *The Gentleman's Magazine* is another and the same. Some readers of *The Athenæum* may be able to suggest, and perhaps to state, the name of the forger. If they can do so, they will elucidate a "literary curiosity."

W. FRASER RAE.

END OF VOL. I.

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